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The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

Causes of the conflict and obstacles to conflict resolution

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Abstract

Since 1988, the states of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in conflict over the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh. The conflict has developed into one of the most intractable and complicated disputes in the international arena, with the main parties being the two rivalling sovereign states plus the “unrecognised state” of Nagorno Karabakh. Despite the optimistic statements and claims by the OSCE and after many years of negotiations and talks, the peace process remains in stalemate. The research argues the virtues of Track Two diplomacy and highlights the successful instances where it has made important contributions to the ‘official’ or Track One diplomatic process. It also explores the potential of a ‘no war no peace’ situation by discerning the factors influencing the progress of the conflict. The research shows that a deeper understanding of the obstacles to peace is achieved by appreciating the significance of historical events as well as recognising the motives and interests of the different parties. The study reviews all major factors which have led to the failure of resolution efforts, particular the negative role played by Russia. It concludes that the scholars in the field of conflict resolution can bring about a lasting peace to this region, provided there is a fundamental change in the structure of the co-chairs of the OSCE.

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Common Abbreviations

ACNIS	Armenian Centre for National and International Studies
Armenian SSR	The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic
ARF	Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun)
Azerbaijan SSR	The Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPSU	The Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EAPC	The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
IDPs	Internally Displaced People's
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKAO	Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OFK	The Organisation for the Freedom of Krabakh
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
TARC	Turkish –Armenian Reconciliation Commission
TACIS	Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the formation of the newly-established states in 1991, in Central Asia and the Caucasus, created confusion in the structure of the international order. This situation, which came about at the end of the tense Cold War period in the domain of global policy and international relations, seemed to promise a new world order which would largely be composed of common concerns and interests such as global harmony, stability and international cooperation. Many experts in the field of international relations had predicted that these conflicts and instabilities in the international sphere would be replaced by global stability and international cooperation. But after a short while, it emerged that this was not the case. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some local and regional conflicts that were a result of the Cold War, ended or somehow began a process of settlement. But at the same time the world also observed the intensifying of ethnocentrism and extremist micro-nationalism in different areas, particularly the former Eastern Block. As a consequence, this was to produce fresh instability, insecurity and fresh conflicts, and in most of these, no bright outcome was envisaged. During this period, the number of regional and supra-regional outsiders who were in some way interested in either settling or stirring up the dissension, increased and finally caused these conflicts to become more and more complicated.

The NK conflict was and still is one of these examples, involving the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Its origins are a consequence of the intensifying

ethnocentrism and extremist nationalism which continued for a long time. The conflict still exists today and has at times shown signs of getting worse. There is unlikely to be an imminent resolution to the conflict.

The NK dispute is rooted in Russia's actions and discrimination during their occupation of this territory in the middle of the Russo-Iranian second periodic war which ended in 1828 and was followed by the Turkamanchai peace treaty. Thereafter, the inhabitants lived reasonably peacefully together up to the 1980s when the Communist regime ended. During his dictatorship, Stalin aimed at a settlement of the ethnic problems by merging Karabakh - with its 4800 square km area and a population of 140,000 - with Azerbaijan within the Soviet Republic, to form an autonomous republic with the Moslem population gradually being replaced by Armenians.

Stalin was well aware that if the Armenian majority engaged in a struggle in the region, located within the new borders of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic, the hostilities would be solely between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians and would guarantee Moscow's role as a power dealer. The igniting of the conflict dates back to 1988 during the rule of Mikhail Gorbachev when restraints were cast aside. With the introduction of *glasnost*, the differences between the Armenians and Azeris became apparent and the attacks commenced. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the main reason for the escalation of the fighting and the beginning of a fully-fledged and destructive war between the two states in the final years of the twentieth century. The war resulted in 35,000 casualties and over 800,000 internally-displaced

people and war refugees in Azerbaijan, and about 350,000 in Armenia. Although Armenia was able to successfully settle the refugees in the NK battle area, 80,000 Azeri refugees from NK and other occupied neighbouring regions are still waiting in temporary camps for the resolution of the dispute. In addition, about 20 per cent of Azerbaijani territory, including a vast area outside of NK was occupied by Armenian forces.

At the present time, despite almost fifteen years since the signing of the cease-fire treaty (12th May 1994) and the numerous mediating efforts and initiatives advanced by regional and international negotiators, the outlook for a settlement is as bleak as ever.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the NK conflict was considered a domestic affair, but after the independence of the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia in 1991, it was regarded as a struggle between two states which was then transformed into a regional conflict through the interference of external powers and by the continuation and escalation of the crisis. Lastly, the geo-political importance of the region along with the exploration of its considerable energy resources shown by the proposal of restoring the Silk Road and north-south, east-west corridors, transformed the conflict into an international issue. In the initial stages of the crisis, achieving mutual agreement and understanding was easy, due to a lack of deep hostility and the sole involvement of the contending parties in the conflict, but the interference of outsiders deepened the confrontation and the settlement became more difficult and complicated. This caused those involved in the

dispute to feel disillusioned with its resolution.

Since, a “no war no peace” situation leads to fear amongst people about the resumption of military operations, it can be said that the longer such a situation continues, the greater the feelings of insecurity in the region and the longer it continues, the worse it will get. Although for most political analysts on regional issues, the likelihood of an escalation of the crisis leading to the recommencement of hostilities shortly before the Russian intervention in Georgia, was weak; after Russian involvement in Ossetia and Abkhazia the hostile atmosphere in NK itself became disquieting.

Furthermore, the prolongation of the settlement process had damaged both countries economically. It has to be said that breaking the economic ties between Azerbaijan and Armenia not only had an extremely negative effect on the livelihoods and public welfare of the people of both states but also on the Caucasus region as a whole. With the passing of time, the grounds for resuming ties has faded, and both parties have had to rely on the support of other states. This has happened while hostile attitudes have intensified, so it is quite natural that under such circumstances, the mutual confidence and convergence of viewpoints necessary for peace negotiations have been damaged.

It is only natural that in any conflict, especially a prolonged one, there will be negative geo-political consequences, such as instability and insecurity in the warring region. Furthermore, it causes regional coalitions and unions to be formed, some of which are asymmetrical between the interested outside

powers and consequently an atmosphere of distrust towards each other's intentions. Moreover, it is evident that the opposing interests and goals of external powers are not only an obstacle to the settlement process but also pave the way for a continuation of the crisis and its spread to neighbouring regions. It is clear that this conflict is deep-rooted and has significant international implications.

It seems that there is a basis in the NK conflict for opposition and the confluence of outsiders' goals and interests. In addition, it has transformed the crisis into a regional and international one which has also obstructed the resolution process. It is more likely that the continuation of the "no war, no peace" stalemate is the consequence of the same opposition and the convergence of different and oppositional postures. Thus, the NK conflict has spiralled out of control in Azerbaijan and Armenia to the extent that neither of the two sides is able to solve it without the will and cooperation of all the neighbouring and external powers. Therefore, the often detrimental conduct of these powers is the most decisive factor in the development of the disagreement in comparison with the aspirations of both factions in the dispute. For instance, Russian expansionist policy and its wish to maintain its superiority in the region, as well as the negative reactions of other regional states - especially those opposed to Russia's policy, such as parts of Europe and the US - is without doubt the most important factor in the continuation of this situation. Also, Turkish, Pan-Turkish, and Pan-Turanist policies in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the position of those opposed to this policy occasioned by the national interests and goals of Russia, China, and Iran,

have played a prominent role in maintaining the status quo.

In addition, it is clear that the Caucasus enjoys a special standing in US global strategy, so that the White House, like the Kremlin, has declared the region to be within the orbit of its national interest. Clearly, the disparity between the US and Russian policies and their rivalry about their sphere of influence in the area are considered obstacles in solving the regional issues, especially the NK crisis. For example, the Caucasus, situated in the heart of Eurasia, is considered to be the gateway to Russia as well as to east, west and south Asia. It also enjoys strategic superiority and extensive human and natural resources. In sum, it is not a place to be easily relinquished by the US or Russia.

As the disputed area between Azerbaijan and Armenia is located on the northern borders of Iran, it has a two-dimensional importance for that country, both economically and in terms of national defence. Thus, the NK conflict directly overshadows Iranian national security and regional interests and Iran is interested in a mechanism for settling the crisis, whether or not it relates to the continuation, escalation or process for establishing peace in the region. Consequently, the conflict is closely related to the national interests and security concerns of Russia, Turkey, Europe, and the United States, and all these powers are affected and have roles to play in the advancement of conflict resolution.

In short, the geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the Caucasus, and

the serious and extensive antagonism of the powers in the region have caused it to be referred to as a “great game” once again, with the difference that this time it is not only an issue between Britain and Russia but also involves many regional and supra-regional outsiders in close rivalry for influence in the area.

However, it should be explained that the supra-national factors which are outside the control of the conflicting factions played a fundamental part in the origins and the continuation the NK crisis. The role of domestic factors are also significant, such as NK’s geo-political importance and its special situation, militarily and economically for both Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the existence of extremist parties whose minds feed on historical events like massacres, wars and religious differences. Successful conflict resolution will occur with a comprehensive understanding of the situation, so the role of domestic politics in particular and the influence of regional and outside regional powers will be discussed in detail in this study. Lastly, this conflict has remained unresolved for more than 15 years and the cease-fire has been in force since May 1994.

This study will look at the origins of the dispute, the reasons why a solution has not yet been found and proposals for how this bitter conflict might be settled. These are the principle factors motivating the author in this research. This work will conclude that because of the reasons below, the attempts at mediation which have been exercised thus far to settle the conflict have not been successful, and will continue to be unsuccessful in the future. The work

concludes by expounding the idea of Track Two diplomacy to resolve the dispute. This conflict has had many proposed solutions – all of which have failed up to the present time. The author puts forward the virtues of Track Two as a means of resolving the dispute from the bottom up to bring peace, development and prosperity to NK and the wider Caucasus region.

There have been many reasons – direct and indirect, internal and external, short-term and long-term - which have led to the lack of resolution of the conflict. For these reasons, the aim of this study is to propose a formula, based on experience of modern mediation methods to settle it.

Therefore, in order to do this, this research will explore the factors that caused the continuation of the NK hostilities and the lack of success in mediation. Thus, the central question of this work is what were the reasons that caused CSCE (now known as the OSCE) mediators to fail in the resolution of the NK conflict? Thus, the main intention is to show that by not cooperating with those interested outsiders who have a role to play in the dispute and especially by ignoring the interests of the regional powers and also by not applying the findings of scholars in conflict resolution, any peace plan would have failed.

In this study, the method of composing and processing the subjects is grounded in causality, analysis and theory. Also, the mode of compiling the information, proofs and documents is based on field research and interviews with officials and relevant authorities. Besides, in using the library facilities, an

attempt has been made to benefit as much as possible from the most up-to-date resources and texts. In this respect, numerous problems and shortcomings were confronted. So despite spending a great deal of time and expense, it should be mentioned that there was real difficulty in accessing many objective, comprehensive, neutral or reliable sources regarding this conflict.

However, it is hoped that this research will be comprehensive. It can certainly be claimed that, up to the time of this study, there are no sources to be found concerning the conflict, in which the different aspects of the subject have been completely and exhaustively covered. There are a few Armenian, Azeri and Russian informants whose research covers a special period of time or subject, in each of which the topics directly reveal the political, national and religious leanings of the authors. In other words, their prejudice and partiality towards one or other of the warring parties is quite perceptible. It is also true, of course, that some studies that have been written in the scientific and research centres of developed countries have a number of glaring errors so we can claim they are not valuable scientifically, because the researchers and authors are not sufficiently familiar with the history of developments and the culture of Caucasian nations and tribes before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In particular, some writers have tried to promote and justify their own regional viewpoints and aims. In short, the sole purpose of their research has been to investigate the national goals and interests of their respective countries.

Thus, it is no surprise that none of the peace plans proposed by these researchers for the resolution of the NK dispute has been accepted by the conflicting factions. As with any peace proposals, the interests of the opponents and some regional powers have been ignored, either erroneously or intentionally. This is indicative of the fact that the mediators were not aware of some of the basic issues and rules for playing the game in the region. It is noteworthy that this problem is easily proven even by the propositions of some of the mediators. Another similarity between the agreed resolutions and those proposed by mediators in the past is that both seek to settle the quarrel through traditional methods instead of applying objective and scientific ones.

All in all, such issues strongly motivated the author to compile a complete, documented and scientific set of sources, based on historical realities, and to try and establish stable peace and justice in the region. Because the area has been seriously damaged by the continuation of the “no peace, no war” situation, it is evident that if a just and stable peace is established in the region, enormous political and economic benefits will accrue to Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the wider region.

In any event, in order to give a thorough and balanced account using a range of sources and to make the work as objective as possible, the following research methods were used, in addition to Armenian, Azeri, Russian, Persian, English and other texts:

- 1 Interviews with appropriate scientific and academic figures from the

various parties to the conflict

- 2 Using interviews of the parties to the dispute that had been reported by the media and news agencies
- 3 Interviews with several authorities of the regional states who had played a role in the conflict, i.e. those of the Turkish and Russian foreign ministries.
- 4 Interviews with the Iranian authorities who had mediated directly.
- 5 Using the official positions and declarations issued by the governments and ruling parties of the opposing groups and other effective states.
- 6 Using essays published in those newspapers that normally indicate the official positions of those states.
- 7 Making use of many articles found on different web sites and in the media regarding the NK conflict
- 8 Using the Regional & International Research Centres' web sites, particularly the European and American ones that were active both in war and peace and in conflict resolution.
- 9 Using Armenian, Azeri and Karabakhi web sites.
- 10 Studying the research done by scholars concerning conflict resolution and the methods that could be applied in this conflict.

Also, the author's interest in peace keeping and security concerns was the main consideration in accepting this mission in the conflict region and was also the strong point of this research.

It is necessary to explain that the author is a career diplomat with over twenty-five years' experience. He was the first Iranian ambassador to

Armenia and was stationed in the region for five years under the most critical conditions. He worked directly with Armenian and Karabakh officials and indirectly with Azeri officials, he was also the founder of Iranian studies in the Caucasus and was the special envoy at CIS meetings. It should also be mentioned that because of the efforts and considerable success of the Iranian embassy in establishing and developing cooperation (especially economic), which was considered to be of vital assistance to Armenia in the war situation, he (as the ambassador) enjoyed the respect and trust of the Armenians in Yerevan and Stepanakert. He was among the few diplomats who travelled to Karabakh and closely followed the NK situation. Moreover, since concluding his mission in Yerevan, he has followed developments in the region.

During the past few years, one of the author's greatest privileges has been the opportunity to work with Professor Paul Rogers. The chance to work with him for more than a decade has allowed the author to develop a sound appreciation and understanding of the general area and theories of conflict resolution. During this time the author has also been able to familiarize himself with the work of various scholars such as Azar, Burton, Curle, Doob, Fisher, Roger and Ronald, Hare, Kelman, Saunders and Wedge amongst others.

The author has been particularly inspired by John Burton's work, career and achievements as he saw a number of parallels with his own experience. Towards the end of the Second World War, in his capacity as diplomat,

Burton attended the San Francisco Conference, which set up the United Nations and in the 1960s in the UK he drew up ideas for conflict resolution. In a similar fashion, the author's ambition is to pursue an academic career after years of working as a diplomat.

As both countries in the confrontation were within the ambit of Iranian territory and civilization in the not-too-distant past, they enjoy deep historical and cultural ties with Iran, so it is not surprising that the author possesses an extensive background knowledge and precise awareness of the developments of the region.

However, in order to increase the scientific level of the study, every effort has been made to use all the available relevant documents and research. Thus, over 200 published books in different languages such as Persian, Russian, Armenian, Azeri and English have been consulted. Furthermore, over 50 specialized magazines have been used and all the scientific and specialized web sites that were active during the war and peace and conflict resolution.

This study consists of nine chapters. The first two present important background information and a modern history of the conflict. In the third, the issues and positions of the conflicting parties are presented. In the fourth, an analysis of Karabakh geopolitics is put forward with an analysis of the interests and politics of outsiders. Chapter five and six analyse the early mediations and solutions and the Minsk Group process. Chapter seven looks at the legal overview of the conflict and how the domestic and international legal process impacts upon the dispute. Chapter eight looks at the socio-

political atmosphere in the region. Chapter seven presents the conclusion by looking at the solutions and plans that have previously been introduced and also an understanding of why they have failed. Finally, chapter nine proffers the virtues of Track Two diplomacy in resolving this conflict.

Lastly, it should be stated that the author produced this study, with the aim of helping further peace and stability in the region and of developing cooperation not only between the two Caucasian nations under review but also creating a favourable environment for cooperation, harmony and confidence for the entire region. Therefore, it is hoped that it will be of benefit to authors and researchers in academic centres and be of practical application in achieving these ends.

Chapter 1: Context

Introduction

This chapter will endeavour to give some necessary background information on the Caucasus region and also on the NK conflict. It will look at the natural geography of the region, the political geography and also the natural resources and economy. More detailed background information regarding the people and culture and monuments is detailed in appendix 3.

Because of its vast natural resources, Nagorno Karabakh (NK) was one of the first regions selected by human beings for settlement. The three regional powers, Iran, Turkey and Russia, have influenced NK in many ways including its name. Nagorno-Karabakh means “mountainous dark gardens”. *Nagorno* is a Russian word which means “mountainous”, *kara* in Turkish means “black” and *bagh* in Persian means “garden”. The Azeri name of the region is *Khankandi* and the Armenian term for it is *Artsakh*, meaning “strong forest.” This region of 4,400 square kilometres or 1,699 square miles is officially located in the Republic of Azerbaijan and is situated in the south west region of that country. The Soviet Union created NK in the state of Azerbaijan in 1924. Appendix 1 shows the position of NK in the Caucasus region.

The language spoken in NK is Armenian but the dialect is considerably different from that spoken in Armenia. This region has no borders with

Armenia but because of Armenian success in the current conflict, it now has a border with that country.

NK enjoys geo-strategic and geopolitical importance in the Caucasus and has six administrative districts. Karabakh is mountainous and rich in mines particularly of gold, silver, copper and zinc. Although the economy of this region largely depends on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and cattle breeding, new industries such as carpet and rug-making have also been established. NK has many rivers, inland waters and springs and its most important rivers are the Aras and the Kura. The latter flows through Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan while the former separates Karabakh from Iran. NK has played a great part in economy of the south Caucasus. This area is geopolitically important because of its natural barriers. Both the Armenians and the Azeris historically claim NK. During its annexation by Russia, 80 per cent of the population were Azeris and only 20 per cent Armenian. Since the start of the current dispute, however, the population demographics have changed, as approximately 75 per cent are Armenian and 25 per cent are Azeri. The government in NK announced that the population in 2007 was 138,000.

Natural Geography

NK is an ancient and historic territory, one of the first regions of the world selected by humans for settlement due to its attractive environment, fertility, and its rich natural resources. For example, the *Azyakh* cave, located in the

mountains of Karabakh is a relic, which shows that this ancient region has been one of the first places in the world inhabited by primitive men called *Antrop Azyakh*.¹

This zone consists of lowlands and mountain ranges and, since the dispute first erupted, has been known in Azerbaijan as the Autonomous Province of "*Nagorno Karabakh*."

The area of NK is 4,400 sq/km. Its north-south length is 120 km. and the east-west width varies from 35 to 60 km. NK includes about 12.5 per cent of the entire Karabakh zone. Geographically, Nagorno Karabakh is located between 39°, 25' and 40°, 30' N, and 46°, 20', and 47°, 20' E.²

Karabakh is situated in the south-east of the Lesser Caucasus region, between the Arax and Kura rivers. To the north, it reaches the Lesser Caucasus Mountains (Murovdog range with a maximum height of 3,724 metres). The northern slopes of the Karabakh range (with the peaks of *Ghiz Ghalehsi* 2,843 metres, *Ghirakh Ghiz* 2,827 metres, and *Boyork Kirde* 2,725 metres) are located in the western and southern parts of the region.³ The north-east and northern slopes of the Karabakh mountain range extend to *Moghan* and the Karabakh lowlands. Thus, the mountains surround the major part of the region. The height of the volcanic plateau in the western area (located between the Zangezur and Karabakh mountains) ranges from 2,000 to 2,500 metres. From north to south, the plateau's height decreases and its width also narrows. This plateau is shaped like a triangle between the basin

of the Hagaru and Vorotan Rivers, and it continues along their whole length. In this part, the plateau's height decreases to 500 metres.⁴

Karabakh territory is bordered by the "Arax" river and extends from "Khodaafrain" to "the broken" bridges of the south. To the north it extends from the *Goran river* in *Ganja* province to the *Kura* river. The peaks of *Kushbak*, *Salvarteli*, and *Erikly* are at the boundary of the territory to the west. The eastern border is the Kura River which joins the Arax River in Javad village (Saber Abad).⁵

There are some deep valleys and depressions in the region as the rivers spring from the mountains. The *Arax* and *Kura* are the two most important rivers in the area, which are fed by rain as well underground sources. The *Tartar*, *Indja*, *Khachen*, *Kar-kar* and *Vorotan* are other rivers in the province. The *Kura* River, which flows through Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, is 1,364 km long, and is the longest in the Caucasus. The area of its basin is 18,800 sq/km. The *Arax* River is 1,072 km long.⁶ The water from both rivers is used in agriculture and electricity production.

There are also some lakes in NK like the *Algal* on the volcanic plateau, which is the greatest in the area. It is 5 km across and 8 metres deep.⁷ This lake was formed by melting ice caps in the Caucasus.

NK's flora is unique. The plain is overspread by various kinds of wild and semi-wild plants. The "broad-leaved" trees and shrubs cover the

mountainous parts. The highlands (2,000 to 2,300 metres) are covered by alpine and semi-alpine plants. In general, about 33 per cent of the region is cloaked by forests, and shrubs. There are various species of trees, such as the *Pistachio*, *Ash*, *Linden*, *Hornbeam*, *Yew* and the *Turmeric* (the most prized). Also, there are fruit trees and plants, such as apple, pear, walnut and tomato.⁸ In the forest clearings flowers grow: *violets*, *tulips*, *wild roses*, *lilies* and *carnations*. *Blackberry* bushes are abundant. The forest covering of NK varies in different parts from chestnut brown and grey to alpine and black steppe.⁹

With regard to the diversity of its wildlife and fauna, NK is a special territory. There are animals such as wild goats, bears, wildcats, deer, wolves, foxes, rabbits, squirrels, porcupines and birds like pheasants, partridges, wood pigeons, and many others.¹⁰

Climatically, the lowlands have dry winters and temperate summers. The highlands are cold. Karabakh has three climates: temperate warm, temperate cold, and cold. In winter, the average temperature in the lowlands is 0.5 to 2°C and in the highlands it is -3 to -4°C. The hottest months are July and August, when temperatures are 72° F (22° C) and 71° F (21° C) respectively. The warmest places of Karabakh are the lowlands of *Varanda* and *Jraberd* provinces.¹¹

In the lowlands, the average rainfall is between 400 and 550 mm. and in the highlands, between 800 to 900 mm.¹² Most rainfall is recorded in the months

of May and June. It is usually very heavy tropical-type rain often accompanied by hail. On average, some 100-150 days a year are foggy.¹³ The *Morovdog* uplands are covered with snow throughout the year.

Political Geography

At present, Karabakh, with an area of 4,400 sq.km, consists of six administrative districts. The capital city, *Stepanakert* or *Khankendy* is located in the south-west. The other main towns are *Martakert*, *Askeran*, *Martuni*, *Shusha* and *Hadroun*.

NK is a patch of fertile, mountainous land on the eastern rim of the Armenian plateau overlooking the broad Azerbaijani plain to the east. To the west lies the Republic of Armenia, less than 5 miles away at the nearest point. The Islamic Republic of Iran is within 15 miles, to the south.¹⁴

Karabakh is connected to the Republic of Armenia by the *Lachin* corridor. NK has no border with any country except the Republic of Armenia and the occupied Lachin territory, and it is surrounded by the Republic of Azerbaijan. The seven regions, which were occupied by the Armenian forces during the 1991-1994 war, consist of *Fizuli*, *Jabrail*, *Aghdam*, *Zangilan*, *Lachin*, *Qubadli* and *Kalbajar*.

The Armenians claim that their reason for occupying the region was its importance for maintaining the security of the people of Karabakh. The

Armenians believe that if the Azeri people had control of the region, they would be able to bombard the inhabitants of NK. It must be explained that NK is for the most part a geo-strategic and sensitive region, and it is considered to be a very important geo-political zone in the area.

It is clear that NK enjoys rich resources: mines, forests, lush meadows. It has many advantages and is totally different to the Azerbaijani lowlands. This mountainous region is the natural border of Armenia too. The Armenians believe that only NK can achieve the unity and physical integration of Armenia, since in the past it acted as a protector against Azerbaijan and Turkey and safeguarded Armenia against Pan-Turkic movements. (The Armenians have a very negative perception of this matter). Therefore, it is evident that NK has a crucial part to play in the economic development and security of the Armenians in the region.

It should be noted that NK has a more strategic function for the Republic of Azerbaijan than for Armenia. In fact, the Azerbaijanis believe that if another country gains control over the territory, which is a natural border, they will be put in an extremely vulnerable position. Also, they are well aware of the economic advantages of this region for their country. They also know that the separation of the uplands of NK from the lowland of Azerbaijan would deprive the cattle of the green meadows and destroy cattle-breeding in this state. More importantly, the Baku River originates in the mountains of NK. Azerbaijani's do not forget the great advantages they enjoyed from different industries and mines, suitable agriculture and cattle-breeding during the self-

determination of NK as they had a great share in the economic development in the Southern Caucasus.

Moreover, militarily, NK has a great geographical advantage, since, as a natural barrier, it protects the region from any kind of attack.

NK overlooks Iran to the south, so it acts as a strong buffer zone against any military attack from that direction. It also dominates the *Gharadog*, and *Moghan* plains to the east, so it can act as a look-out and defensive headquarter against Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and central Asia. The northern mountain range is also a constant defence. NK connects Armenia, and therefore Georgia, and the Black Sea with the west by way of the Lachin corridor.¹⁵

This region also represents the confluence of the eastern and western civilizations, and the two different ideological worlds: Islam and Christianity, as well as the two nationalities and languages: Turkish and non-Turkish. If such a place did not exist, the Turkish world would extend from western China to the north-west of Turkey and Bulgaria. Therefore, challenging and trying to access such a strategic region is quite natural.

Since the era of Russian dominance in the region, the importance of the political geography of NK has been thoroughly clarified. In his report “N^o19” of 12th May 1905, Tsitsianov – the commander of the Caucasus troops - related that Karabakh was a gateway for both Iran and Azerbaijan, because of its

geographical situation. Therefore, every effort must be made to keep its stability.¹⁶ He himself did his best to achieve this vital goal.

Thus, the importance of the political geography of NK gave rise to rivalry for dominance in the region, and this undoubtedly has been the main cause of the dispute and its continuance up to now.¹⁷

Resources of Economy

NK is rich in valuable mines, such as gold, silver, zinc and copper, and other minerals like mercury, chromate, poly-metal, tar and pyrite. There are also quarries of decorative and building stones (marble, plaster, travertine, lime, and high-quality clay) and a considerable amount of hydro-carbon, oil and coal. It also possesses reserves of iron ore and crude oil.¹⁸ Granite, basalt, tuff, limestone, as well as raw materials for cement, graphite, gypsum and sand can be found in Karabakh.¹⁹ It is also well-provided with 120 sources of mineral water, which contain iron and carbon. Generally, water is one of the most important natural resources of NK, as it constitutes about 18 per cent of Azerbaijani water reserves. The rivers *Tartar*, *Hagaru* and *Khachen* originate in this region, and join the *Arax* and *Kura*, supplying the water of these two main rivers. These provide the opportunity for generating hydro-electric power and electricity. In places, they have been harnessed for irrigation and power generation. There is already a hydro-electric power station on the Tartar River²⁰ Establishing power stations on the rivers such as the Hagaru is possible too as these can provide energy and be exploited for cultivating fish

and other aquatic species.²¹ At present, NK has achieved self-sufficiency in electric power.²²

NK enjoys productive forests too. The forests of the region play an important role in providing wood and raw materials for parquet, furniture, musical instruments, fire-wood reserves and also different kinds of wild fruit. Therefore, they play a vital part in the economy of NK.

Another economic feature of the region is its industries. The most important ones in NK are to do with electricity generation and the dietary industries related to agriculture and domestic animal husbandry. There are also factories which produce household equipment. Among the other large sectors of Nagorno Karabakh industry are factories for drinks, dairy production, silk, lumber and wood, shoes, carpets, textiles, cotton and tobacco.

In the 1970s, grape production was 3,400 tons per year. The meat, dried fruit and carpets of NK are well-known, especially the rugs which have been very famous for centuries.²³

NK enjoys an important position in the agriculture of the region. The unique climate, rich resources, nutrients and fertile soil, especially on the margins of the rivers and mountain slopes, provide ideal conditions for agriculture and horticulture. The region is also famous for its grapes, mulberries and corn.²⁴

There are about 162,000 hectares of vineyards and 1,000 hectares of market gardens in the region.

The cereal production rate reaches 56 thousand tons a year, which supplies the demands of the inhabitants. The agricultural sector is able to feed up to one million people.²⁵ NK also enjoys favourable conditions for cattle breeding.

Another economic advantage of NK is its tourist attractions. With the settlement of the conflict, this industry could have good prospects in the region, because NK enjoys a unique natural landscape suitable for the development of tourism and rest areas.

With regard to the economic situation of the territory, it can be stated that it has a considerable role in the southern Caucasus. Unfortunately, the production process has stopped and the region suffers from economic stagnation. This was caused by the war and the economic blockade. However, the number of work-places in factories, offices and in the agricultural sector ensures that 96 per cent of the working-age population is employed.²⁶

Conclusion

It is clear to see that NK and the Caucasus is a very diverse region. An understanding these elements informs the rest of this work. We have seen how the natural geography, political geography, and the resources and economy of the NK and the wider region are characterised. An understanding of these issues gives the reader an idea of how these issues interrelate and

are further developed by chapter 2 and appendix 3 which looks at the people of NK. Of particular note, this chapter has shown the importance of NK's economy to the wider Caucasus region.

Chapter 2: Modern History of the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

Introduction

It is important to have an understanding of the history of NK in order to understand the events which have shaped the present day situation. This chapter will look at Nagorno Karabakh's modern history. Appendix 4 details the ancient history of N K and the wider region.

From the Collapse of the Soviet Union to the Present

The demise of the Soviet Socialist Republic transformed the Karabakh conflict from an internal Soviet dispute into an international political issue, and simultaneously opened the door to mediation attempts by various countries and international organizations.²⁷ After independence, the authorities of both Azerbaijan and Armenia considered the Karabakh issue as a danger that could threaten their new independence. Also, the risk of interference by influential regional and supra-regional players and the transformation of the conflict into a global crisis, made them anxious. After Russian troops attacked Azerbaijan, about seven thousand Soviet soldiers were deployed in Karabakh under the command of General Safonov. They immediately arrested members of the Karabakh National Council. A few days later, Azerbaijani representatives entered Stepanakert to carry out the resolution of the Soviet Supreme Council based on the restoration of Azerbaijani sovereignty over

Karabakh after the abolishing of direct Soviet command. The Karabakhis continued protests against the presence of the Azerbaijani authorities in Karabakh. Although 25 Armenian leaders were arrested by Soviet forces, Azerbaijani direct control over Karabakh was not achieved in practice.

Although Karabakh was now under martial law, the demonstration of 24th April 1990 was staged with 40,000 Armenians attending. The Karabakhis even participated in the parliamentary elections in the summer of 1990 and elected their 12 representatives to sit in Armenia's parliament. In short, the deployment of Soviet troops in Karabakh and their joint efforts with the Azeris to restore Baku's sovereignty over Karabakh led to nothing but an escalation of the racial conflict.

In this period, Karabakh was practically out of control and in the final stages of obtaining independence but the Armenians were seeking its union with the country and not self-determination. In fact, their participation in the Armenian parliamentary elections was based on this thought too. This state of affairs continued for another year until the Karabakhis desisted from their earlier policy to attach themselves to Armenia. On 2nd September 1991, the NK Supreme Council proclaimed the Independent Nagorno Karabakh Republic, situated within the same borders as the Autonomous Oblast, with the addition of the Shaumian district in the north. The Karabakhis also held a referendum on 10th December and confirmed Karabakhi independence by a majority vote.²⁸

It should be mentioned that, based on Soviet law²⁹ the Karabakhis legitimized their action. Needless to say, on 26th November, the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet voted to abolish NK's autonomous status.³⁰

By declaring independence, the conflict was ostensibly changed because thereafter it was considered to be a dispute between the Karabakh Independent Republic and the Republic of Azerbaijan (before that time, it was viewed as a quarrel between the Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan). As a result, this action was counted as a victory for the Karabakhis, because they had disengaged Armenia from the conflict and created space for the Armenian's to manoeuvre, especially in view of the fact that the Republic of Armenia had not recognized Karabakh's independence. However, this issue intensified the hostility and tension between the two parties.

From September onwards, by cutting off the roads and railways, the Azeris had laid siege to Karabakh. In early November 1991, they intensified their blockade by disconnecting telegraph and telephone lines as well.

In such conditions, the Popular Front launched an attack on two fronts – both inside and outside the country. In spite of some victories on the internal front, they suffered tremendous defeats at the hands of Armenian forces in the following weeks. In November, there was ample proof that Azerbaijan and Armenia were on the verge of a real war.³¹

At the same time, efforts continued to resolve the conflict peacefully. In late November, during their visit in Moscow, Ter-Petrossian and Mutalibov, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, laid stress on a peaceful settlement of the disagreement as the Azerbaijani president promised to restore the autonomy of Karabakh to Ter-Petrossian. But the opponents regarded the Karabakh dispute as an internal issue and condemned Armenia's interference as an outsider.

A lack of success on the battlefield and in the diplomatic arena caused the opposition groups of Mutalibov to increase their pressure on the government. The Popular Front asked Mutalibov explicitly either to settle the situation on the fronts or resign from his post. They staged a demonstration in Baku and asked Mehdirov, the Defence Minister, to resign. Mutalibov, who was already under pressure, was forced to relieve him of his position. At the same time, certain events had Mutalibov's political opponents worried, such as Yeltsin's speech about the need for the peace-keeping forces to intervene, and the agreement of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers with the CSCE in Prague, to dispatch CSCE observers to the region. These developments resulted in an escalation of military action in the region.

In early February, fresh Azeri forces were dispatched to some regions such as Karabakh's northern borders, Aghdam, Shushi and Malybeili, but the Armenians were the victors on all these fronts. During the siege of one city – Khodzaly - the Armenian troops called on the Azeri forces to surrender. This

city was counted as one of the Azerbaijan's important military bases and the Azeri unit relinquished it with little resistance.

During this battle, the Khodjali civilians who were trying to reach Aghdam through the Askeran valley, were hit by intense gunfire from Armenian fighters around Nakhichevink village, with many killed. It should be mentioned that according to Armenian sources, the Azeri casualties resulted from their counter-offensive, but killing more than 450 civilian Azeris in Khodjaly provoked the anger of the inhabitants of Baku.³²

The fall of Khodjaly was the beginning of fresh internal and external developments in Azerbaijan. It caused an intensification of the activities of local opponents and Ayaz Mutalibov was forced to resign on 6th March 1992, after a few days of demonstrations.³³ In April 1992, Ayaz Mutalibov declared that the massacre at Khodjaly had been "organized" by his political opponents in order to force his resignation.³⁴

Following Mutalibov's departure, a council consisting of a number of cabinet members such as the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Secretary of the Nakhichevan Supreme Council and two leaders of the Popular Front took the helm under the supervision of Yaqub Mamedov.

After the Khodjaly massacre, international attention on the conflict became more acute and concentrated. Since that time, influential regional and supra-regional states, especially France, Iran and Turkey, played a prominent and

conspicuous role in the affairs of the region including France and Iran who provided some services and aid.³⁵ Turkey issued a warning and rigorously championed Azerbaijan. It cautioned the European states and the US that continuing support for Armenia would result in a regional war. Suleyman Demirel, the then Turkish Prime Minister, explicitly threatened that “all states should know this issue has made Turkey and other Turkish-speaking Republics worried”. Also, Hikmet Cetin, the Turkish Foreign Minister who was visiting Baku when Mutalibov was about to fall, stressed the local nature of the Karabakh conflict and the need for all the regional powers to participate in its settlement, while declaring his government’s support for the Republic of Azerbaijan.

In its first action after the Khodjaly massacre, which occurred in February 1992, the Iranian government launched an all-out effort to end military hostilities and pave the way for negotiations between the two parties. After a few weeks of talks, the parties in dispute agreed to cease fighting and consider a peaceful solution to the disagreement, but subsequent events showed that this relatively short period of ceasefire, which lasted only a week had been used to prepare and arrange for a re-launch of the war, because on 29th March 1992, the Azerbaijani forces attacked on two fronts: Askeran and Martakert, and captured the centre of the latter. Soon after however, the Armenians regained this region. Following this, the Martoni district witnessed violent attacks by the Azerbaijani forces and some areas were actually captured by them. Their next assault on the Askeran front was met by a counter-attack of the Armenian forces. After a period spent in strengthening

their positions in different areas of Karabakh, the Armenians captured some villages near the Stepanakert-Martakert line of communication.

In these circumstances, high-ranking Armenian and Azeri officials travelled to Tehran on 15th March for negotiations to pave the way for an end to the conflict.³⁶

During the mediating efforts of the Iranian authorities to finalize the peace talks, the scattered clashes in the region and especially in the suburbs of Stepanakert were indicative of the fact that the declared ceasefire brokered by the presidents had not been kept. However, Iranian political efforts continued to find a just solution to the conflict. Iran's mediation resulted in an eight-article agreement in Tehran³⁷, which was signed on 6th May 1992.

However, a few hours after signing the agreement, Armenian forces captured Shusha, Azerbaijan's most important and powerful base and their last front in the entire region of Karabakh.³⁸ Thus, the peaceful settlement of the conflict was abandoned at this stage.

On 14th May, less than a week after the fall of Shusha, the Azerbaijani Supreme Council voted to absolve Mutalibov of responsibility for the Khodjaly massacre, and reinstated him as President.³⁹ When Mutalibov was recalled by a parliament with a communist majority, the internal conditions of the Republic became critical. The Popular Front's supporters attacked the presidential palace, the parliament, the radio and television stations, the

airport and, on the whole, captured the rebellious centres of the capital and in just one day overturned the government. Mutalibov meanwhile escaped to Moscow.⁴⁰ When Yaqub Mamedov abdicated from the post of acting President, the Supreme Council of the Republic appointed Isa Gambarov, from the APF, who confirmed that the presidential elections would take place on 7th June. The Supreme Council dissolved itself, vesting its authority in the Azerbaijani National Council, which was under the control of the Popular Front.

Whilst the Azeris were engaged in this power struggle, the Armenians did not lose the initiative. Taking advantage of the victory in Shusha, they captured Lachin on 18th May. Thus, the Karabakh-Armenia land bridge, which had been cut in the early stages of the crisis, was re-established.⁴¹ Thereafter, the military position of the Karabakh Armenians improved and the defence positions of Zangezour were strengthened.

Since the scope of developments extended in a southerly direction (Meghri, Ghapan and the frontier localities of Nakhichevan and Turkey, Sadark and Yaraskhavan), there were several diplomatic changes in the region, as the vital and strategic Karabakh-Zangezour-Nakhichevan axis became the focal point once again.

With the fall of Lachin, the Turkish Foreign Minister unexpectedly travelled to Baku on 5th March 1992. Then the Turkish Prime Minister and the President warned of the need to dispatch forces to Nakhichevan. But a counter-warning

from Russia and the US made Turkey understand that the international situation was not timely for the fulfilment of Turkish plans.

In the chaotic situation following the fall of Lachin, the Popular Front swept to power. Elchibey's rule marked the beginning of an upturn in Azerbaijani military fortunes. At the end of June, the Azeri forces captured the greater part of the Shaumian district, to the north of NK, and the Martakert district in the north-eastern sector.⁴² Military development such as this had a special effect on political developments in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Supreme Council of NK declared a state of emergency and general mobilization.⁴³ Also, by the end of June, large rallies were calling for the resignation of Ter-Petrossian and his government and the Dashnaks picketed the television station, demanding a live transmission to broadcast their views.⁴⁴

These victories bolstered the authority of the Popular Front. Military activities generally focused on the Martakert axis until the winter. Up to the end of the year, the Azeri forces tried to retake Lachin several times but their efforts were in vain. In the early winter of 1992, 2,000 out of 5,000 sq/km of Karabakh was under the authority of the Azeris.

During that winter, military operations decreased but the economic embargo on Armenia and Karabakh (and its consequences) was intensified. Georgia, which supplied its oil and gas through Azerbaijani facilities, was put under pressure to sever Armenia's only access route with Russia. This avenue was unsafe because of widespread civil strife between Georgia and Abkhazia, so

it was cut off for most of the time. Armenia's gas pipeline, which passed through Georgia, was blown up several times as a result. These conditions led to a bad situation for the Armenians, to the extent that in 1991, and especially in the winter of 1991-1992, the energy and food supply situation in Armenia became critical. Many enterprises and factories were closed, with large numbers of workers laid off. Educational institutions were closed and houses were left unheated. Furthermore, about half a million homeless people and refugees, who had escaped from Azerbaijan, became a great burden on Armenia.⁴⁵

However, some improvements were made in their foreign relations, the most important of which was the change in Moscow's policy towards the Caucasian turn of events.⁴⁶ After the meeting between Ter-Petrossian and Yeltsin in Moscow (11th January 1993), the Russians criticized Azerbaijan for their attack on civilian targets in Karabakh. In addition, they promised to assist Armenia to overcome their difficult plight.

As the Armenians were engaged in the retaking of lost territory, in late winter of the same year, they recaptured ten villages in Martakert in early February. Such military developments had an immediate effect on the Azerbaijan interior, and the Executive Committee of the Popular Front criticized Elchibey for the recent defeats.

Meanwhile, the Armenian advances continued in Martakert and districts such as the Sarsang dam, which was economically important, and the city of

Kalbajar to the far west of Martakert was captured by the Armenians. In none of these districts, were the Azeri counter-attacks successful. With the fall of Kalbajar, the Armenians took possession of a vital area between Karabakh and Armenia and about 60,000 Azeris were made homeless. The capture of Kalbajar, like Lachin, consequently provoked a negative reaction and condemnation from the international community. In effect, the capture of Kalbajar and the take-over of territories in the northern areas of Shaumian, as well as the advance towards the city of Fizuli (on Karabakh's southern border with Iran), proved to be another turning point in the Karabakh struggle.

Iran's mediating efforts produced substantial results by achieving a primary agreement for a ceasefire, the deployment of forces as observers, as well as the resolution of issues such as the exchange of prisoners of war and the raising of the economic blockade, but thereafter, with Europe performing an active role, the conflict process entered a new stage. In this period, in spite of the complicated situation and the fact that all existing evidence pointed to the fact that there would inevitably be a breaking of the ceasefire and the recommencing of the war, Iran continued its efforts as before and even took part in the Armenian and Azerbaijani summit. The Russian ambassador was also present there. In this summit, the tacit agreement of the Azerbaijani authorities had introduced serious issues like the presence of Karabakh representatives in the upcoming talks, but since some Azerbaijani groups only cared about their own personal and group interests, this caused the fall of Shusha and Lachin. Moreover, with rumours that Iran was supplying armaments to the Armenians, some groups tried to prevent Iranian activities

at all costs. Thus, although the gravity of the situation was small in comparison to future developments and the achieving of peace was quite likely, in practice, such a valuable opportunity was missed. Now, it was the Europeans' turn to increase their efforts to mediate peace.⁴⁷

In January 1992, the CSCE which had by now admitted Armenia and Azerbaijan as members, decided to send a mission to the area in order to examine the solutions to the ceasefire and the deployment of observers. Two missions visited the region in February.

The Foreign Ministers of the CSCE then organized the Minsk conference to settle the Karabakh problem. The members of the conference were Azerbaijan, Armenia, Czechoslovakia, Japan, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, the United States and Belarus. The conference was held in the city of Minsk, the capital of Belarus.

Since the fall of Lachin had been condemned by the CSCE and the Azeri government had declared that it would not agree to attend the negotiations until the Armenians withdrew from Lachin, the work of the Minsk Group was delayed for a while. Following the military victories in the eastern part of Karabakh, Azerbaijan agreed to attend the negotiations and several meetings were held in Rome from June to July 1992. At this stage, the presence of Karabakh representatives in the negotiations was in dispute. But these talks were suspended in mid-September as a result of the Azerbaijani delegation's

adamant refusal to recognize the Karabakh Armenian delegation as a negotiating partner.⁴⁸

During the Minsk Group negotiations, an effort was made to resolve the disagreement in the following way: after consultation with the governments of the conference members, the Chairman of the conference was to invite the elected and other Karabakhi representatives as key parties.⁴⁹ This method was to no avail, because the Karabakh Armenians and Azeris both sought to be invited as selected representatives.

Because of the absence of the Karabkhi representatives, the negotiations had no effect, Azerbaijan and Turkey rejected direct negotiations with the Karabakhis and intended to recognize Armenia as the party involved in the conflict. In spite of the declaration that it was not the party in direct dispute, Armenia attended the negotiations in a capacity different from its official position. In effect, during the summer, the Azeris and Armenians declared that the commencement of the negotiations was dependent on the withdrawal of the opposing forces from the designated areas. Hence, in the summer and autumn of 1992, the efforts of the Minsk Group and even Russian measures to arrange a ceasefire had no effect. In fact, it seemed that the Armenians were pessimistic about the outcome of the CSCE mediation at this stage, so they called for UN intervention to settle the disagreement. The Armenian ambassador to the UN petitioned Boutros Ghali (the UN General Secretary), to dispatch observers to the region in order to help establish a ceasefire. Two days later Azerbaijan declared that it was only calling for the presence of

CSCE observers and would not allow UN or other observers to interfere in the region.

During the next round of negotiation in December and January, both parties agreed to withdraw their military forces from Karabakh and to demilitarize the region through the presence of foreign observers in Karabakh. They also agreed that until the final settlement, the Lachin corridor was to be controlled by international observers. For a combination of reasons, the agreements did not manage to bring about a solution. The main reason was that the Minsk Group could not convince Russia to accept multinational peace keepers, as Moscow's position was to monopolize peace-keeping in NK.

In the negotiations from 26th February to 1st March 1993, it was decided to take the necessary steps regarding the deployment of CSCE observers and the administrating of the Minsk conference, but taking into account the military developments in Kalbajar and other areas of Karabakh, a resumption of the agreements and negotiations was delayed. The next developments in the NK conflict were again affected by Azerbaijan's internal situation.

With approval of parliament and Azerbaijan's acting President, Suret Hussienov was appointed Prime Minister. The US and Turkey opposed this move and recognized Elchibey as the legal President and supported him as before.

In such chaotic conditions, the Armenians used the opportunity to capture the entire province of Martakert in Karabakh. They also launched violent attacks on the Azeri positions in June 1993. The chaotic conditions that persisted in Karabakh, together with Azerbaijan's critical economic and political situation, prompted the opposition to start a rebellion in Ganja, the second largest city in the country, which led to the capture of the city under the leadership of Suret Husseinov, one of the army commanders. Husseinov, who was supported by outside powers, especially Russia, called for the resignation of the President, the Prime Minister, and the parliamentary Chairman. He intended to place Heydar Aliiev, the then President of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, in power.⁵⁰

In the opinion of the public, Elchibey was responsible for the political, economic and social disarray and for Azerbaijan's ignominious defeats. It should be said that during his one-year rule, Elchibey had no intention of making concessions to Russia, as he lent towards Turkey and the West. Taking advantage of different forms of leverage, Russia in return endeavoured to control the Popular Front's policies by exerting economic pressure on the Karabakh crisis. On the other hand, it supported the Armenian's on some fronts and was responsible for Azerbaijan's losses in different battles. Most importantly of all, opponents argued that Elchibey always favoured the interests of the western governments and the Israeli regime, as opposed to the demands of the people. In short, under such conditions, Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, national security and governmental sovereignty suffered fundamental damage. In fact, it was a

consequence of the Popular Front's policies, which led to Shusha, Lachin and entire sectors of Karabakh being virtually handed over to the Armenians. When two large regions - Talyshi and Lezgi - declared their independence and Azerbaijan was on the verge of civil war and collapse, Elchibey summoned Heydar Aliiev, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, to Baku to stamp out the rebellion.

When Suret Husseinov advanced on Baku and deployed his troops in one of its suburbs, Elchibey, knowing he would be defeated, left the city for his native Nakhichevan. This time, Heydar Aliiev, who was strongly supported by Russia and other regional powers, was elected as Speaker of the Aghdam, one of the largest cities in the western part of the country.

The continuation of such a predicament in Azerbaijan and the beginning of separatist riots in Dagestan and Lenkoran worsened the situation. Under such circumstances, the Armenians attacked Aghdam again and because there was no resistance, they took possession of other areas in the south of Karabakh along the border of the Iran. Finally, they reached the Arax River and when they saw a small number of Iranian border guards, found that further advance was impossible. At this stage, the Armenians captured Aghdam, Zangilan, Ghobadli, Jebrail, Kalbajar and Fizuli, in addition to Karabakh.

The situation became intolerable for the Azerbaijani government and they had to withdraw from their previous positions. Thus, they contacted the Karabakh

Armenians and, while partially agreeing with them, asked them to stop the attacks and arrange a ceasefire. On the other hand, Heydar Aliev cancelled the oil contracts with western companies and stated that he was joining the Commonwealth of Independent States and accepting the Rouble as the official currency, in order to attract and appease Russia.⁵¹ In short, the battlefield conditions remained the same until both parties signed the ceasefire treaty in Bishkek on 12th May 1994.

It has now been more than 10 years since the cessation of hostilities, and many observers are of the opinion that the balance of power and military forces has been the most important obstacle to the resumption of war.

During these years, many mediators have assumed responsibility, collectively and/or individually, for the settlement of the conflict: Iran from 1993 to 1995, France from 2000 to 2001, the US in 2001, the CIS from 1993-1994 and Russia from 1991. But, as stated above, the most important mediator was the Minsk Group which originated from the CSCE. Recognizing the Minsk Group as the mediator, the UN Security led four resolutions in the first years of the dispute and entrusted the promotion of the conflict settlement to this group.

After the Minsk Group had proposed different solutions - none of which was agreed by the disputing parties for a variety of reasons - the Presidents of the two sides' resorted to direct meetings. These have been held on 20 occasions in different countries, and have not as of yet produced any

effective results, because neither party has been prepared to compromise on basic issues.

It is clear that throughout history, Karabakh has been under the rule and influence of many powers, ranging from the disparate invaders in antiquity, through to the Persians, the Tsars, the Russian and Soviets to the present regime. Although Armenia has been under the domination of different powers throughout its history, it has been able to preserve its religion, culture and language. Furthermore, Armenia has always deemed NK to be the locus of their identity. The Azeris or Aranis on the other hand have a culture very much like that of the Iranians and a religion and a language similar to the Turks. It can therefore be said that they identify with each other.

Russian attempts to control the Caucasus led to the 1812-13 war with Iran which resulted in the Gulestan Treaty. With this treaty NK came under the hegemony of the Russians. Ten years later the second Iran-Russia war broke out and the Turkmanchai Treaty was signed. The annexation of NK by Russia culminated in what amounted to the destruction of the Caucasus' identity and historical consciousness as they implemented policies and programmes for the diminishing of Islamic and Iranian influence in the region.

As a result of Armenian loyalty to the Russians, the latter were able to change the demography of the region. Their policies encouraged Armenians from other parts to come and settle in the Caucasus which had been dominated mostly by the ruling powers. Under the Turkmanchai Treaty 50,000

Armenians emigrated from Iran. The total number of Armenians who migrated to the Caucasus was 150,000.

The fights between Azerbaijan and Armenia from 1918 to 1920 resulted in Russian involvement. In 1920, after the Bolshevik take-over of Russia and the operations of the Red Army in Karabakh, Goris, and Zangezur, Moscow gained control of the situation and stressed that the disputed areas could not be entrusted to Dashnak, Armenia. Stalin stated that if Armenia became communist, this outcome might be possible.

The NK issue was referred to the Caucasian Bureau of the communist party. Under Stalinist pressure, the Bureau agreed to consign NK to Azerbaijan. This was due to the implementation of Joseph Stalin's policy of divide and rule. Under this policy, NK was established in 1921 as an autonomous oblast within Azerbaijan, in spite of Armenian opposition.

Sixty-five years later, Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* provided an opening for the resurgence of debate on the issue. The Armenians held numerous demonstrations protesting against Azerbaijan's control over NK and demanded unification with Armenia. In spite of the strong Armenian lobby in Moscow, the ruling government prevaricated and failed to give a decisive and clear response.

These developments resulted in a direct struggle between the Armenians and Azeris. The massacre of civilians in several townships intensified the violence

nd consequently a massive demonstration was staged in Yerevan in protest. Gorbachev`s government finally announced that any alteration in the borders of the Republics was prohibited. This declaration also led to a new wave of demonstrations in Yerevan. After that, the NK movement changed its policy from legal hostilities to direct confrontation with the ruling government. In 1989, with the intensifying of the activities of the armed forces, the ethnic conflicts were transformed into military operations.

In October 1991, when Ayaz Motallibov became President of the Azerbaijan Republic, he officially proclaimed its independence. In a referendum held on 21st September 1991 the Armenians voted for and promulgated self-rule and on 23rd September Leon Ter-Petrossian was elected as the first President. Thus, after 70 years, the communists were displaced. After the collapse of the USSR, the NK conflict was transformed from an internal to an international problem.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explain the ways in which past events impact on the current situation of the conflict. The turning point in this history was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, which transformed the conflict from an internal to an external one, thus making the conflict more complex and therefore harder to resolve.

Chapter 3: The Issues and Positions of the Conflicting Parties

Introduction

In order to develop a model that can allow an analysis of the NK conflict, an examination of the main actors and decision-makers in the conflict together with their role and involvement is required. As this conflict is frozen and intractable it is important to find out the sources of this intractability.

Scholars such as Azar, Burton, Rubin, Pruitt, Kriesberg and Cole have tried to define the complex nature of intractability. Based on their findings, this chapter will examine and analyze the economic, political and socio-cultural issues of the parties involved in the NK dispute. But before that, this chapter will begin with a brief background to the three main parties

The following map shows the position of Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK:



Map 1: Geographic Position of Armenia and Azerbaijan and NK

Policies of the Conflicting Parties

Armenia

Armenia is a relatively small state with a population of four million and it shares borders with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and Turkey. Since independence, one million Armenians have emigrated from their country. Ninety eight per cent of the Armenian population is Armenian, 1.2 per cent is Yezidi and the remaining 0.8 per cent is made up of Russians and Greeks. The main language spoken in Armenia is Armenian and the majority of the population is Christian and follows the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Armenian Republic gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and follows the constitution that was approved by a referendum in November 2005. The main active political parties in Armenia are the Republican Party of Armenia, the Prosperous Armenia, the Country of Law, the Heritage Party, the People's Party of Armenia, the National Accord Party, the Republic Party, the New Times Party, the United Labour Party, the Dashnak Party, the National Democratic Union, and the Armenian National Movement.

The position of the Armenian Government has always been that any negotiation aimed at a resolution of the NK problem should be a complete solution and include a resolution of the political status of NK.

The view of Yerevan and Stepanakert is that NK should either be independent or be unified with Armenia. The Armenians believe that the defeated party should pay for the concession not the winners. It can be said that they have military advantages and a substantial area of Azerbaijani territory is under their occupation. The Non-governmental International Crisis Group estimates that about 14 per cent of Azerbaijan's territory, including NK, is controlled by NK Armenian forces. Other sources however estimate this figure closer to 20 per cent.⁵²

In April 2001, Presidents Kucharian and Aliyev attended talks in Florida and met with the US President George Bush. Ghukasyan, the president of NK emphasized during these talks that other options would mean "that we move

not towards peace but towards war.”⁵³ Armenians have always reiterated that they do not accept vertical relationships between Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

A 2005 survey conducted by the Armenian Centre for National and International Studies (ACNIS) showed that 90 per cent of Armenians believe that the persisting memory of the genocide⁵⁴ was part of the Armenian national identity along with its language, culture and history.⁵⁵

Also 40 per cent of 1900 people supported unconditional normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, 29 per cent disagreed with it and 31 per cent were undecided. The survey also suggested that the Turkish recognition should entail territorial and financial compensation to Armenia as well as the relatives of genocide victims.

The conflict with Azerbaijan has led to the closure of Armenia’s borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, and this has created vast economic problems for the Armenian Government. The economies of both countries are important for development and economic cooperation in the region.

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan has a population of eight million and shares borders with Armenia, Georgia, Iran and Russia. It is flanked on one side by the Caspian Sea. Due to economic difficulties, a million people have emigrated from Azerbaijan since its independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991. Eighty five per

cent of the Azerbaijani population is Muslim and the majority follow the Shiite faith. The official language spoken in Azerbaijan is Azerbaijani.

The constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic was approved in November 1995 by referendum. The main active political parties in Azerbaijan are the New Azerbaijan Party, the Popular Front Party, the Musavat Party, the National Independence Party, the Civic Solidarity Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Liberal Party, the Azerbaijan Democratic Independence Party, the Islamic Party and 50 other minor parties. The ruling party of Azerbaijan is Yeni which was founded by the late President Heydar Aliyev who is the father of the current President.

Violence against the Armenians started in Azeri cities. Before the conflict, the first cases of mass violence were recorded in Sumgait, an industrial town located not far from the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, when in February of 1988 an angry Azerbaijani crowd came onto the streets and for three days engaged in massacres in the Armenian quarter of the town. At least twenty six people were killed and injured including hundreds of Armenians.⁵⁶ The conflict soon spread beyond Baku, and inter-communal violence led to the deaths of several thousand Armenians and Azerbaijanis.⁵⁷

Turmoil in Baku and political competition for power in Azerbaijan provided opportunities for the Armenians to capture the last Azeri town Shusha on 9th May 1990. The Armenians then secured Lachin to form a corridor joining

Armenia and Karabakh. The fall of Shusha resulted in a change of Government in Azerbaijan.

For a better understanding of the internal situation in Azerbaijan it is also important to mention the changes and internal political rivalries prevalent in the country. In March 1992 the Communist government of Ayaz Mutalibov fell after he and his Prime Minister were forced to resign following mass demonstrations over the ineffective Azeri response to Armenian military advances in. He tried to return to power but fighting in the streets resulted in a victory for Abulfaz Elchibey from the Azerbaijani Popular Front who aligned the country closer to Turkey, whereas before it was closer to Iran and Russia. After an Armenian victory at Kelbajar, Suret Huseinov overthrew the Elchibey government in June 1993 and brought Heidar-Aliev, a former Communist leader of Soviet Azerbaijan, to power.

The position of the Azerbaijani government regarding the NK conflict is that this dispute has come about as a result of Armenian aggression and its demand for a full withdrawal of Armenian troops from all the occupied territories. President Aliiev stated in July 2006 that the withdrawal of NK forces from occupied territories must be followed by the return of Azerbaijani refugees who could then help to decide the status of NK.⁵⁸ Yerevan however, has always rejected direct involvement in the conflict.

The fact that Azerbaijan has virtually lost the war has put it in a comparatively disadvantageous position. The Armenians use the occupied territories outside

Mountainous Karabakh as a bargaining chip in the issue of the status of the territory and a security guarantee against Azerbaijan.⁵⁹ The death toll of this war is estimated to be 25,000 to 30,000 people.⁶⁰

The UN. High Commissioner for Refugees had reported that at the end of 2005, there were still about 581,500 people considered refugees or displaced persons in Azerbaijan and 219,550 in Armenia.⁶¹ Armenia has granted full citizenship to Armenian citizens who fled Azerbaijan. The question of refugees has always been part of all the negotiation agendas and this issue is discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

Nagorno Karabakh

NK is a region of 1,699 sq/ m (4,400 sq km) with a population of almost 200,000. 146,000 Armenians and 49,000 Azeris live in NK. It declared its independence from Azerbaijan on 12th July 1988. In February 1988 the Soviet of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast passed a resolution with a majority of 110 to 17 requesting its incorporation into the Armenian SSR.⁶² Azerbaijan did not accept this resolution and called the decision illegal. On 1st December 1989, the Armenian Supreme Soviet declared NK a part of Armenia.

In addition to economic issues, the internal, external, stable and unstable factors which have formed the policy of the disputing sides are discussed in this chapter. This chapter also reviews the latest positions of the parties, and

the present peace process and the position of refugees which has always been an important issue regarding Armenians and Azeris

Factors Shaping Azerbaijan's Policy

Azerbaijan has its own unique natural and human characteristics, such as rich resources, weak infrastructures and people with idealistic views. Politically, the Azeris have been under the influence of two camps / positions during the 20th century: the first being Turkey with its nationalist thoughts and - at the opposite extreme - the Russians with their cosmopolitanism through which they, themselves, played a basic combative role against the East. The Administration of the Eastern Nations Congress in Baku in 1920 was the high point of Moscow's ascendancy over Azerbaijan, and this formed the first government of the Soviet Union in the Caucasus with the support of the Red Army. Azerbaijan, which hastened the decline of the Caucasus Independent Republic by supporting the Ottoman Government and its claims to the Caucasus territories in Georgia and Armenia, was the first state to accept the Communist Regime after two years and Baku was the first city to demand independence 70 years later in 1990, though it was rigorously suppressed by the Red Army.⁶³

With such a background, the Azeris never imagined that they had provoked such a deep crisis within their state. On 18th October 1991⁶⁴, Azerbaijan declared its independence and on 23rd November it annulled the NK autonomy⁶⁵ and 99.89 per cent of Karabakhis supported the separation from

Azerbaijan.⁶⁶ However, in spite of these extensive arrangements, the result of the war was nothing but a series of defeats not only on the battlefield but also in the administrative capital, which was sometimes threatened. Thus, at the present moment, a return to the state of autonomy is regarded as a national goal for the Azeris. In this respect, the Azerbaijani leadership is trying in an informal way to recognize the identity of NK. In the middle of 1993, Heidar Aliev announced that he was ready to accept temporary borders for the Karabakhi Armenian separatists.⁶⁷ However, preparing the internal grounds for this has always been a problem and a drawback for Azerbaijani officials, especially the lack of national determination, which was due to difficulties with the forming of a “national concept” which has placed Azerbaijan in an embarrassing situation. The existence of several traditional, autocratic, eastern dictatorships, who enjoyed high status under communist totalitarianism, caused the Azerbaijanis a lot of trouble when expressing their opinions and developing political goals.⁶⁸

Moreover, the political differences, which were due to the opposing socio-political groups, deflected attention from the NK conflict onto internal problems. In fact, the NK conflict became a struggle for power between the political groups. Therefore, the lack of national determination as a result of internal differences activated their power system against Armenia which enjoyed national unity and integration. For instance, the “Popular Front” made every effort to encourage strategic harmony with Turkey and the West and, at the same time, radical opposition towards Russia and Iran. This was

happening while Elchibey's aggressively Pro-Turkish bias was alienating both the moderate intelligentsia and the ethnic minorities.⁶⁹

It is fair to say that having such a simple view of the environment and interpreting it in such a simplistic way indicated an intense idealism in Azerbaijan. Although the era of the "Popular Front" had ended and the present regime is moving towards realism, the political division still remains. Naturally, if Azerbaijan can bring about internal unity and national determination, it will be able to overcome its main behavioural restrictions. Since the Azerbaijani effort has reached a deadlock, and progress in the political-military arena against the Armenians of NK has proved impossible, their main behavioural constraint has remained as it was before. It is certain that overcoming this limitation will accelerate and facilitate the achieving of the national goal. Another curb on the behaviour of Azerbaijan is its relations with Russia and other countries. Despite efforts to alter the effective causes of the NK problem, Azerbaijani leaders have always had to confront their own limitations and the activities of influential forces in the region, so it is logical that they will not be successful in developing their national goals in NK unless the restriction is modified or eliminated.

By virtue of its geopolitical location and its strong resources Azerbaijan lies at the intersection of Turkish, Russian and Iranian interests.⁷⁰ Another handicap for the economy of Azerbaijan is the seventy years of Soviet hegemony which have resulted in serious structural imbalances. For decades, the prime emphasis was on production of raw materials such as oil, gas, cotton, and the

Azerbaijani economy was heavily dependent on exports to and imports from Russia.⁷¹

After this brief introduction about Azerbaijani behavioural restrictions, one can discuss their attitude towards the factors which shaped its policy regarding the NK conflict. The policy concept of the Azerbaijani authorities is that the fighting, which began in 1988, was the consequence of Armenian military aggression to bring about 'Land Separation' and annexation by Armenia. Consequently, the Armenian forces occupied the territories outside of NK, and hundreds of thousands of people became homeless in the process. Thus, the Azeri authorities called for the Armenian forces to withdraw from the occupied territories and for the homeless people to return to their homes. The Baku authorities are ready to adopt the best arrangement by their government with respect to the NK conflict, the fulfilment of which will be determined through the process of talks. Therefore, the principal basis of the Azerbaijani position is to maintain its territorial integrity, an issue which cannot be negotiated.⁷²

The Azerbaijani authorities have always insisted on the restoration of the 1988 NK conditions (as explained in chapter 4). Azerbaijan reported the measures taken by the Armenians during the occupation as an aggression, and tried to gain international support.

Under present conditions, by using the oil element along with the increase in the number of foreign oil companies to exploit the Caspian Sea resources,

Baku has not only modified its position to settle the NK conflict, but has instead aggravated the situation. By inextricably linking the NK conflict to the oil and energy pipelines issue, Baku is trying to secure assistance from its western associates, and to frustrate the Armenian efforts for recognition of the proclaimed Republic of NK.

Heidar Aliev, the Azerbaijani ex-President has announced explicitly that any country that helps to settle the NK crisis and to terminate the occupation of Azerbaijani territory will have access to the resources of the Caspian Sea. However, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, Hasan Hasanov, hinted that any agreement might be nullified, arguing that the pipeline would cross the territory of the countries that supported them in resolving the Karabakh problem. He claimed that until the NK issue had been resolved no final decision on the route of the pipeline would be taken.⁷³

It can be said that the settlement of the NK conflict and the establishment of a stable peace in the region is a fundamental challenge for the Baku authorities, primarily to settle the economic problems in the country.

Factors Shaping Armenia's Policy

The essential doctrine of Armenian foreign policy is to establish ties with all countries in the world, especially those in the local area, based on mutual respect, and it includes four priorities:

- To maintain territorial integrity

- To establish friendly ties with all neighbouring states
- To guarantee the security of NK and its residents
- To participate actively in the new processes of European security

While NK is included in the four essential priorities for Armenian foreign policy, “gaining Karabakh” is also a modest goal for the Armenian state⁷⁴. In fact, the national goal of the Republic of Armenia is still to annex NK. After a complete occupation of the autonomous region, the Karabakhi people were apparently forced on 6th January 1992 to change their objectives and to declare independence, and because of the involvement of the international community, they relinquished their past slogans. However, on account of Armenia’s complex behaviour which expresses a national aspiration, we cannot be certain that they have desisted from the plan to annex NK.

In these circumstances, the protracted nature of the conflict has consumed the resources of the country, but the leaders of the Republic follow the issue persistently because of its national importance. So the first priority for Armenian foreign policy is the NK issue⁷⁵ and while there are many facets to this policy, all are in some way related to the conflict in NK, whether they are economic or political.⁷⁶

Armenia like Azerbaijan, however, faces some restrictions and problems in adopting an appropriate policy and decisions. The political development of NK is one of the curbs on the actions of the Armenians. During the first period, from 1988 to 1992 Armenia dominated the conduct of the Karabakhis.

From the beginning of the second period, from 1992 until now, they have shifted their policy. Although they unexpectedly approached Russia for support, this development could not be transferred to other aspects of their foreign policy. Thus, the kind of leadership which shows no opposition to the macro-politics of Yerevan is desirable for Armenia.

Russia constitutes another limitation on Armenian policy as the latter is heavily dependent on Russia for security. Iran is another restriction on Armenian political diplomacy, considering the 46 km border between Iran and Armenia which is of huge strategic significance. We find that Iranian political considerations are vitally important and sometimes crucial in the region. This led Iran at an early stage - virtually as soon as the two belligerents became independent - to offer its good offices to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict.⁷⁷ However, Iran's mediating role ended after Elchibey's opposition.⁷⁸

In short, Armenia's location in the Caucasus amongst the three powers, Russia, Turkey and Iran who are also political rivals has caused some limitations to Armenia's foreign policy, and the leaders of that country are forced to make controlled decisions.⁷⁹

The Republic of Armenia, much like Azerbaijan, has suffered and continues to suffer economically as a result of the NK conflict, and if the uncertainty of the "no war, no peace" situation continues, there is little hope, especially for Armenia, of improving its economic standing. The NK conflict had also made

impossible the creation of a larger, regional market for goods that could be produced in Armenia.⁸⁰

Armenia's vulnerable economic position means that it can afford a long-drawn out dispute even less than Azerbaijan.⁸¹ On the other hand, following the aggravation of the conflict, Armenia is suffering from the effects of economic sanctions imposed by Azerbaijan from the east and Turkey from the west. This has caused problems for the people in that country, and the survivors of 1992-1994 war are exposed to serious danger. Moreover, foreign trade has had an insignificant role in the economy of the country and the industrial yield has been 63 per cent of GDP.⁸² These conditions along with sanctions against transportation and energy paint a sorrowful picture of Armenia. One of the consequences of the sanctions has been widespread unemployment. Thus, in 1993, out of a total population of 3.7 million people, only 1.7 million of the working-age population was employed; though, according to an official statistic of the Armenian government, the unemployment rate in that year was estimated at 5.4 per cent.

It is fair to say that this figure is unreliable, because in January 1994, unemployment in Armenia was reported by UNICEF at 59 per cent, or equal to one million individuals.⁸³ These conditions forced the residents to leave the country in such great numbers to obtain jobs that emigration became one of the national security issues of that country.⁸⁴ At the present time, about 20 per cent of the population has moved abroad. Experts have predicted that emigration will continue for the next decade. Regardless of any discussion

about the verity or untruth of these statistics, what is obvious is that emigration will not stop until the tangible benefits of economic growth are experienced by the population.⁸⁵

80 per cent of government financial income is provided by taxation. Foreign aid to the Armenians (Spiurka) was considerable during the first years of independence, but, when the Spiurka were informed about the financial corruption of some sectors of the government and the embezzlement of foreign aid, they shifted their funds to provide investments. Anyhow, Spiurka has had an undisputed role in the development of Armenia's economy and policies.⁸⁶ For example at the time of transition to a market economy, the diaspora's financial support played a key role in the recovery of the economy in 1994-1999.

Briefly, because of these problems and restrictions, Ter-Petrossian, the Armenian ex-President, was convinced during the last year of his Presidency (1997) that the Karabakhi request regarding either annexation or independence was consistent with the present realities and conditions. The proclamation of the Republic of Karabakh has not been recognized by the international community, and the material-spiritual support by the Republic of Armenia may have brought about negative and irretrievable consequences for Armenia's economy. He also construed that the NK issue was the reason for the disarray in the Armenian economy. In one of his news conferences, Ter-Petrossian announced to the Armenians that they must choose either economic prosperity or NK, since their welfare was dependent upon

establishing peace in NK.⁸⁷ Both of these conditions could not be achieved together. For some reason, he appointed Robert Kocharian – the incumbent President of the Proclaimed Republic of Karabakh - as the Armenian Prime Minister. Ter-Petrossian accepted a phased approach to the conflict which had been proposed by the Minsk Group in September 1997. He decided to compromise and settle the dispute, but he resigned under pressure because the members of his cabinet – Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, Defence Minister, Vazgen Sargsian, and Minister of the Interior and Security, Serge Sargsian, opposed his acceptance, arguing that the proposal was not to the benefit of Armenia and Karabakh.⁸⁸

In March 1998, after Kocharian had become Armenian President with the support of the Nationalist Party, and those in the government who wanted an independent NK, the policy of aiding NK was propounded more than ever before, as a traditional concept. Kocharian also expressed his opposition with the phased solution after he was elected. Azerbaijan had also accepted this solution at that time. Kocharian asked the Mink Group to find an all-out solution. However, Kocharian also understood, like Ter-Petrossian, that by this policy of prolonging the conflict, Armenian advantages would be devoted to the interests of NK. The policy of not normalizing relations with Turkey and the unquestioning support for NK are not acceptable to the people of Armenia.

At the present time, Armenian officials are trying to maintain their authority in NK, by a variety of means. For example, they have tried to influence the

military structure of Karabakhi Armenians through their own Defence Ministry so as to prevent them carrying out the harsh military actions which could be carried out, if need be, by the appointed government. By taking advantage of NK's economic dependency on Armenia, they have increased their influence on NK.

Yerevan sets the price for NK staple food commodities by controlling the routes leading into Karabakh. In the meantime, their financial contribution to the NK annual budget is another of Armenia's controlling forces. However, internal developments in Armenia are still under NK control, in the sense that many Armenian officials are from Karabakh. The Armenian authorities believe that their power is somehow related to the settlement of NK

Factors Shaping the Policy of the Proclaimed Republic of Nagorno Karabakh

The Karabakhi Armenians have a considerable and decisive role in the conflict. Although, the Armenians of Armenia and NK have the same interpretation regarding the NK conflict, we can observe occasional differences between Yerevan and Stepanakert and we must consider the possibility that these differences may become strategic problems in the future. As mentioned before, the development of the conflict from the viewpoint of Yerevan-Stepanakert relations covers two distinct periods. In the first period, 1989 to 1992, NK maintained its political stance in Armenia and at the same time followed Yerevan and conducted its political diplomacy in the guise of Armenian policy.

During this period, the dominant idea in Stepanakert and Yerevan was the annexation of NK by Armenia. This was even approved by the Armenian Supreme Council. At that time, the slogan “one nation, one state”, which was chosen by the leaders of the NK Committee, was strongly supported by Armenia and gave them power in the short term. Also during that phase which we can call the period of the emergence of emotion and nationalism, Yerevan confronted lots of problems resulting from sanctions, but sustained NK by providing fuel and foodstuffs. The whole of Karabakh and some regions of Azerbaijan were gradually occupied by the Karabakhis, and Karabakhi leadership achieved power and then political differences arose between Yerevan and Stepanakert.

After the declaration of independence by the Autonomous NK in 1992, the conflict changed into a regional one. In the second period, the Karabakhi Armenians established direct contact with Russia because they believed this approach to Russia was needed as they would be able to play a key role in solving the dispute. In this connection, the Dashnaks⁸⁹ stood for a close relationship with Russia and in particular with the centrist political forces such as the Civic Union.⁹⁰ The Karabakhis believed at that time that appealing to Russia could release them from different pressures. The NK policy was to persuade the Russians to support their demands. On that occasion, it was not also acceptable to Yerevan that the Russians should support NK independence directly.

Another obstacle for the proclaimed Republic of NK was their unrecognized position. They were trying to legalize their numerous successes and victories, such as those on the battlefield over the Azeris. The Armenians believed that the achieving of such a goal was more important than political guarantees.

At its inaugural session in January 1992, NK's new legislature adopted a declaration of independence, which was not recognized by the international community as it was not able to alter the framework of the nation-state, which was the basis of the contemporary international system. Moreover, Russia together with the CIS and other regional nations, did not support the idea of independence for NK because this development could cause a revolution within the framework of the regional states, especially in states such as Georgia, Ukraine and even Russia. Thus, the Karabakhi goal remained suspended because of these restrictions. However, despite the political problems and constraints and their ambiguous goals and stances, the Karabakhis continued to try and achieve their goal. They also demanded Karabakh be legally recognized and subject to International Law, while on the other hand, they spoke about unity with Armenia.⁹¹ Regarding the developments during the past few years, especially the sensitivity of the international community and some regional states, the Karabakhis not only did not relinquish the subject of annexation by Armenia, but gradually became convinced that achieving independence was impossible. Thus, according to their last position, they discussed the idea of a broad and conditional autonomy. If this strategy succeeded, Karabakh would be independent in practice and not just nominally. Thus, they called for an autonomy which

included a horizontal relationship with Baku. Moreover, other Karabakhi conditions included the guaranteeing of their security by the international community and the protection of the Lachin connective channel with Armenia.

The Position of the Parties over the Disputed Issues

In this section, we review the disputed issues and consider the viewpoints of both parties regarding the settlement of the NK conflict. The most significant issues in this respect are: the occupied territories; the issue of refugees; the homeless and security; as well as NK political status or identity. These issues are directly dependent on the conflict and result from it. They are also interconnected.

The Occupied Territories

One of the most significant issues in the settlement process of the NK conflict, and which has always been followed seriously by Azerbaijani leaders, is the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, which were taken over by Armenian forces in 1993.

These territories include eight regions in the west and southwest of Azerbaijan, namely Kalbajar, Zangilan, Qubadli, Jabrail, Fizuli, Aghdam, Shusha and Lachin. In all the bilateral and multilateral negotiations, Azerbaijan has always condemned Armenia's violation of Azerbaijani lands and called for an immediate and unconditional evacuation by Armenian forces

from the occupied areas and for the Azeri refugees and homeless to be returned to their homeland.⁹² Azerbaijan believes that about 20 per cent of its land has been occupied by the Armenian forces, and thus one million Azeri refugees have to live in makeshift camps. For the Baku authorities, returning the occupied territories has been viewed as a prerequisite to the solution of other key problems, including the legal status of Karabakh.⁹³ Former Azeri Foreign Minister, Hasan Hasanev even went so far as to say that any talk of political settlement was a “political bluff” unless Armenia freed Azerbaijani land.⁹⁴

On the contrary, the Armenian position regarding the occupied territories, except Shusha and Lachin, is abundantly clear as they believe that the survival of the Karabakhis lies in keeping these regions. While they accept Azerbaijani ownership over the said regions, they state that freeing them is dependent upon solving the problem of the legal status of NK.⁹⁵ Besides, having regained certain strategic heights, they fear that any unilateral return could be used by Azerbaijan as a means to halt the talks and restart the war.⁹⁶ Furthermore, this issue is compounded by the ambiguity of the border positions to which their armed forces are to be withdrawn, and this is also unacceptable to the Armenians.⁹⁷

Obviously, the Armenians are ready to liberate the occupied areas outside of NK, such as Aghdam, Fizuli, Jabrail, Kalbajar, Qubadli, Zangilan, if they achieve their goals. But they state that their continued possession of Shusha, inside NK and Lachin which provides them with a land bridge to Armenia, is

not negotiable. For Azerbaijan, the loss of both regions is unacceptable.⁹⁸ Clearly Armenia has a clear advantage at the current time compared to Azerbaijan.

Since, the Karabakhi position regarding Shusha and Lachin is different from other occupied regions, and because of the strategic importance of these two regions, it is necessary to discuss them separately.

Lachin

At the present time, the only land connection between the Republic of Armenia and the Proclaimed Republic of NK is the Lachin corridor. It is a vital and strategic area and is the main link between Armenia and NK. The town of Lachin and the surroundings play an important and strategic role in this regard. Before occupation by Armenians on 15th May 1992, the name of Lachin was Abdaliyar. It was under the control of Armenia. This corridor was opened in 1992, and the 11 million dollars (US) construction costs were donated by the Armenian diaspora mainly from Europe and the United States.⁹⁹ This passage plays a vital role for the Armenians because it not only connects Armenia and NK, but also links NK with other countries. The Karabakhis showed no compromise when liberating this region because it provides a strategic tie with Armenia and overseas territories. On the other hand, considering that one of the most fundamental Armenian demands is the need for the international community to provide security guarantees for the Karabakhis, the Armenians make every effort to keep the Lachin corridor

because they regard it as a vital guarantee of their security. During the Soviet period, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast existed as an enclave which was separated from Armenia by the Lachin province. At its nearest point, Karabakh was separated from Armenia by only nine kilometres.¹⁰⁰

Today, the officials of Stepanakert will not consent, under any circumstances, to becoming an enclave once more. But on the other hand, the Republic of Azerbaijan strongly rejects any change in its territorial integrity.¹⁰¹ Vafa Guluzade has illustrated the point in the following way: You understand it if Britain began to say “we can no longer be an island; we have to be connected with dry land. We have, therefore, to build a bridge to France and take a piece of France’s territory.”¹⁰² The officials of Yerevan prefer Lachin to be either part of NK, or at least be under the control of their forces. But this is unacceptable to Azerbaijan. The Baku officials insist that Lachin be demilitarized, that “refugees” be allowed to return and that formal Azerbaijani control over the corridor be restored. In return they would introduce a humanitarian link (sometimes referred to as a transit corridor) manned and controlled by international observers acting as guarantors.¹⁰³

It should be mentioned that the matter of a 99-year lease of Lachin to Karabakh was recommended by Boris Yeltsin in 1995, but it was rejected.¹⁰⁴ While it was initially resisted by Stepanakert, the Karabakhis have recently been more amenable to the idea. They have even mooted exchanging an (unspecified) part of Karabakh territory, in return for Lachin.¹⁰⁵ Alternatively,

the possibility of Kalbajar, to the north of Lachin, providing a crucial link with Armenia has been raised.¹⁰⁶ In this respect, Paul Goble posed the plan for a “territorial swap”, followed by access corridors from NK to Armenia, in return for Azerbaijani access to Nakhchivan. If it accepted this strategy, Armenia would require it either to hand over some lands in return, or to grant unilaterally the occupied regions plus the Megri area to Azerbaijan, instead of NK. Some Armenian intellectuals consider the carrying out of this solution as a form of suicide. According to what is mentioned above, the Lachin corridor is a critical and very important part in the settlement of the conflict.

The Azeris are unwilling to compromise over the issue of the restoration of the occupied territories, especially Lachin, as it is entirely Azeri-populated. The mediators recommended that the Lachin corridor should be controlled by international peacekeepers. But it seems that if this solution is accepted by the conflicting parties, it will cause problems and complications because, in this respect, some regional powers like Iran and Russia oppose the presence of American, Israeli or western European forces in the region.

Shusha

Shusha is another zone that the Armenians need to keep in order to guarantee their security. In fact, the Karabakhis believe that Shusha is an inseparable part of NK and is of geo-strategic importance for them. In their view, the only problem for Azerbaijan is the Azeri refugees. But its liberation and return to Azerbaijan would reduce the status of Karabakh security. It is

obvious that Azerbaijan, on the other hand, has no reason to agree to the cession of part of its country which has considerable political, military and cultural importance for the Azeris.

Based upon the commitments of the Stepanakert authorities to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Karabakhis guaranteed the safe return of the refugees and IDPs.¹⁰⁷ But there is some ambiguity about repatriating the refugees to Shusha. This strategic city (the population was primarily Azeris before the war) is located at the top of a mountainous area and is totally controlled by Stepanakert. It was from Shusha that Azeri heavy weaponry bombarded the Karabakh capital, at the beginning of the war in 1991-1992. The “liberation” of Shusha (Shushi to the Armenians), on 10th May 1992, marked a highly symbolic gain (victory) for the Karabakhis, but for the Azeris it was a terrible psychological blow.¹⁰⁸ Stepanakert fears the restoration of Azeri administrative control over Shusha and the effects this could have on the future sustainability of Karabakh. Troop withdrawal and the return of Azeri IDPs, in their eyes, are counted as a threat.¹⁰⁹

An idea propounded by the (former) Minsk Group co-Chairman of the OSCE, Kazimirev on the future status of Shusha was that: “Shusha should not be a city inhabited by a single ethnic group; it should be transformed into a historic-cultural centre, a symbol of coexistence between the two nations and their religions.”¹¹⁰ It should be mentioned that the Azeri authorities have proposed that they allow Armenian refugees to return to Shaumian (which

was an Armenian community before the war and is now under the control of the Azeris), in exchange for returning their own refugees to Shusha

Refugees

According to a UN estimate made during the recent war that took place from February 1988 to May 1994, between Armenia and Azerbaijan over NK, approximately 800,000 to one million Azeris became refugees.¹¹¹ During 1991-1994, 620,000 refugees escaped from the western part of Azerbaijan where the military operations resulting from the NK conflict were continuing. The number of Azeris who were banished between 1988 and 1991 was 198,000.¹¹² As of 31st December 1993, the Azerbaijani government reported that there were in total 778,000 internally-displaced persons resulting from the NK conflict.¹¹³

Considering that refugees experience critical and difficult conditions in the camps and that the Azerbaijani government faces numerous problems for their resettlement and accommodation, the Baku authorities believe that in the first stage of the peace process, the return of the refugees must be negotiated. Therefore, they call for the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied regions, and then the way will be paved for returning the refugees to their homes. Also taking into consideration the complication of the resolution to define the legal-political status of NK, the Baku authorities announced in 1993 that they were ready to solve this complicated problem at the next stage. This position taken by Baku was based on the proposition of

the Minsk Group of the OSCE, regarding a phased approach to the conflict. The UN Security Council through four resolutions - 822, 853, 874 and 884 - stressed in 1993 the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied territories and prepared the ground for returning the refugees.¹¹⁴

In contrast, the Armenian authorities have their own position regarding the return of refugees. Taking into account their improved situation as a result of the military victories, they remained silent in regards to the UN Resolutions, and furthermore expressed their opposition to the peace plan proposed by the Minsk Group. Thus the Armenians believed that the refugee problem had to be solved through a complete and comprehensive plan whereby the returning of the Azeri and Armenian refugees, together with their security *en route* and during their residence, should be considered at the same time. In this respect, Arkadiy Gukasyan, the President of the Proclaimed Republic of NKK announced in 1997: "I believe that all refugees must have the right to return voluntarily to their homes and when I speak about refugees, I mean absolutely everyone, including the 500,000 Armenians who fled Azerbaijan."¹¹⁵ The Armenians claimed the conflict has caused a huge displacement of people, including 345,000 of their countrymen, who lived in Azerbaijan before 1988, and sought asylum in Karabakh, Armenia and other countries from 1988 to 1991.¹¹⁶

The Armenians also claimed that from June to August 1992, following the Azerbaijani forces' occupation, more than 20,000 Armenians escaped from Shahumian to the Mardakert regions. In the meantime, 154,000 Azeris left

Armenia. Also 418,000 Karabakhis, including 38,000 Azeris were obliged to leave the regions where military operations were ongoing. It should be mentioned that the figures vary according to the different sources. On the Azerbaijani side, 185,000 people left Armenia itself, and a further 45,000 came directly from NK.¹¹⁷ As stated by the same source, more than 500,000 Azeris became refugees in the occupied regions around NK. According to Armenian sources, 91,000 out of a total 447,000 Azeri refugees were settled in the houses of Armenians who left their properties during the war and the others were sheltered in refugee camps and other centres. Meanwhile, the official United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website announced that over 60,000 Azeri refugees had gone back to their homes near the war zone and more than 50 per cent of them had been settled in temporary camps.¹¹⁸ However, based on the Armenian position, the safe return of the refugees would be possible only when the political and administrative conditions of the region to which they were returning, had been defined.

Security

Security is the most significant priority in the peace process for Armenia and for NK. Here, Armenia defines it as an international guarantee for the assured safety of the Armenians who reside in NK. In fact, they are extremely concerned about the security of Karabakhi residents since peace was achieved. During the past few years under ceasefire conditions, Karabakhi Armenians have not had any problem in this respect, because both sides

have observed the provisions of the ceasefire agreement. Based on this accord between the conflicting parties in 1994, a contact line was set up between their forces and defensive structures were established along the line. According to the agreement, no one has the right to break the line, except in a situation where they have sustained heavy losses. Also, although there have been no military observers or peacekeeping forces stationed there, both sides have complied with the ceasefire provisions.

The Karabakhis believe that both sides are keeping faith with the armistice agreement and continuing the “no war, no peace” conditions because of the balance in military forces and equipment. In other words, the Armenians believe that the non-violation of the ceasefire is because Azerbaijan is not certain about the end of the fighting otherwise they would have no hesitation in recommencing hostilities. The Armenians are trying to suggest that they will not begin a second war, because the reinforcing of military units and the access to strategic military positions, which have been achieved through the occupation of Azerbaijani territories, makes it unnecessary to restart the war.¹¹⁹ NK refuses to withdraw from the occupied territories, because it views this as a means of ensuring its own security and as a lever in the peace talks.¹²⁰

Stepanakert has remained in this position from the outset as any kind of change or modifications to the contact line, made through territorial advances depends solely on international security guarantees. According to the Armenian view, an acceptable international guarantee would be feasible

merely by establishing a buffer zone and deploying multinational peacekeepers.¹²¹ Another issue in respect to the security of the Karabakhis, is that in any political agreement, the Karabakhis intended to claim the right to use foreign forces (from Armenia), if Azerbaijan restarted the war. In other words, the Karabakhis called for the legitimizing of Armenia's military support in the case of Azerbaijani aggression against NK. This means that an Azerbaijani assault on NK would be regarded as an attack on Armenia.¹²² But the Azerbaijani authorities do not intend to submit to this Karabakhi demand and they even want the Karabakhi military forces to be disbanded after the agreement.¹²³

It should be mentioned that in the summer of 1993, the Minsk Group mediators reached several solutions with the parties in dispute about the basics of setting up a buffer zone and the deployment of peacekeepers. They even assigned the necessary budget for the peacekeeping forces. In this respect, a group of experts was commissioned to prepare the plan and the ground to bring the agreement into effect. According to the OSCE, after UN approval and the final peace agreement between the conflicting parties, 3,000 multinational peacekeepers were to be deployed in the region.¹²⁴

Legal-Political Status of Nagorno Karabakh

The most important and complicated issue in the peace talks is the final political status of NK when the situation is resolved. Azerbaijan insists that the status of Karabakh should be "accommodated" within the framework of the

territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Armenia and Karabakh insist that the latter's status should be defined from a "clean sheet."¹²⁵ The Karabakhis also stress that NK has never been within Azerbaijan, but rather there were two independent states in the territory of the former Azerbaijani Soviet Republic, and both seceded at the same time from the Soviet Union, according to the principle of "the right to self-determination" mentioned in the Constitution of the Soviet Union.¹²⁶ Although the Armenian side does not intend to recognize Azerbaijani territorial integrity, in 1988 the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was a constituent part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic; in 1918 Karabakh was, at least according to the Armenian side, an autonomous entity (albeit disputed) within Armenia.¹²⁷

The Republic of Azerbaijan is opposed to any solutions, except a broad autonomy for NK. In his visit to the United States during his speech for students in July 1997, Heidar Aliiev explicitly stated that "we will not allow a second Armenian state to be created on the territory of Azerbaijan, nor will the world community, the global society, allow this. Nevertheless, we are prepared to grant Nagorno Karabakh (within Azerbaijan) the very highest powers and very highest status."¹²⁸

On the other hand, NK and Armenia reject any peace plan in which Stepanakert-Baku relations are "vertical" and NK is within the realm of Azerbaijan and its hegemony. Moreover, NK insists on a solution in which Stepanakert would have a direct relationship with Armenia and the world and this would be incorporated in the NK political status. In short, under no

circumstances will NK accept any solution which forces it to return to its former position as an enclave. They believe that the proposed solution might have repercussions for the present political realities. This means that the Proclaimed Republic of NK has kept its independent status for more than a decade. During that time, NK has retained all the characteristics and elements of sovereignty, because Karabakh was a defined territory with a permanent population which also enjoyed an elected government. Indeed, Karabakh is *de facto* independent, while the Republic of Azerbaijan only lays stress on a broad autonomy, which is in itself ambiguous.

In short, the legal and political standing of NK, and the issue as to whether to be independent or part of Azerbaijani territory, is the main question. It must be said that, in 1998 the Minsk Group mediators proposed a “Common State” to solve this problem. It meant that Azerbaijan and NK would be a joint confederation. At the same time, they would be separate but have coordinated political units. Armenia accepted this proposition but Azerbaijan did not, because its authorities believed that this plan prevented them from restoring the territorial integrity of their country, and they believed this was the same as creating the Independent State of Karabakh – a position they were totally opposed to.¹²⁹

As we can see, the legal-political identity of NK is very complicated, because any proposal needs to consider carefully the old and new conditions of the region, the demands of the conflicting parties and numerous historical and contemporary facts. What is clear is that there is no easy solution. In addition,

there are other issues such as the withdrawal of military forces from the occupied territories and their demilitarization to create a security mechanism to resettle the refugees of both sides safely and permanently to guarantee the physical security of the Karabakh population. All these are issues that have resulted directly from the conflict and are inter-related.

As mentioned above, Armenia and NK emphatically call for a comprehensive solution, not a phased one. Therefore, the aforementioned issues cannot be solved in phases or in isolation before the final agreement over NK's political status. However, despite differences about the conflict, the parties in dispute undertake to seek a peaceful solution based on compromise. They have struck some agreements as well. The first breakable but very significant accord was their fulfilment of the ceasefire and the stability of the battlegrounds from 1994 up to the present, without any international security and peacekeeping forces. This confirms the good intentions of the antagonists. The exchange of prisoners of war in May 1996 is another example of agreement between the two parties. These steps indicate that reaching a compromise to settle the conflict is possible.

The current position taken by Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK regarding the conflict is based on their views in the past few years and during the war. Azerbaijan insists on the restoration of its territorial integrity, implying the return of the lands occupied by the Armenians, including both NK itself and its neighboring territories. The Karabakh Armenians, backed by Armenia, view the ideal solution as the granting of independence and international

recognition to the Republic of NK, which would include the Lachin corridor. They reject any solution in which NK would fall within the (even nominal) jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. More importantly, they refuse to enter into “vertical” relations with Azerbaijan. Therefore, the minimal solution the Karabakh Armenians are ready to accept is a form of union, confederation or federation which would guarantee Armenia and NK unrestricted contact opportunities¹³⁰, because, as State Advisor to the Azerbaijani President, Vafa Guluzade commented, in autumn of 1996, “a confederation means an independent state.”¹³¹

As mentioned above, independence or unification with Armenia is still the ultimate goal for the NK Armenians. In fact, in negotiations they have the upper hand by dint of the fact that this has in practice already been achieved and therefore any other solution would be a concession to the other side.¹³² On the other hand, Azerbaijan is not ready to allow the partitioning of its territory and refuses to grant NK the right to secession but is prepared to give the Karabakhis “the highest degree of self-rule and autonomy”, claiming it would be less than independence but more than autonomy. This proposition, however, remains on an abstract level only, and there is a need to articulate it and translate it into a clear proposal. When asked about the details of the Azerbaijani position, officials are unwilling to divulge them during negotiations. Azerbaijan’s position is that NK would enjoy self-rule but no role in foreign affairs, defence or nation-level taxation.

As regards the thorny question of the NK army, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, Tofiq Zulfugarov, was unequivocal and somewhat ironic: “In any form of solution within the framework of the Azerbaijani state, what would be the need for a separate Nagorno-Karabakh army? Against whom would it be directed? Obviously, Azerbaijan. Can you have within one state two separate armies which are moreover confronting each other? Give me an example of any such solution that works, and we shall study it.”¹³³

Nevertheless, the fact that Azerbaijan has not clarified its position and its vision of the future of NK lying within Azerbaijan’s borders is a problem. It is also a fact that when asked about details, the Azeris – their intellectuals, journalists or government officials – seldom offer a coherent view of what such a “broad autonomy” would mean in practice. This, in turn, further increases the Karabakh Armenian’s suspicion that Azerbaijan has no intention of giving NK any real autonomy in the long run.¹³⁴

Thus, Karabakh officials put the problem as follows: “There are many different levels of autonomy, the highest being independence. Azerbaijan has to decide which one it is talking about. Is it Bosnia, Tatarestan, or what? The problem is that they are unwilling to specify their proposal.”¹³⁵

It must be said that Robert Kocharian, the President of the Proclaimed Republic of NK, voiced his interest in discussing a “loose confederation with Azerbaijan”. He also endorsed this plan, reiterating that Karabakh must be accorded equal status with Baku in such a confederation.¹³⁶ In other words,

the insistence of Stepanakert remains the subject of what the Armenian side terms “horizontal” relations with Azerbaijan. Consequently, the positions of the parties remain relatively distant, because a horizontal relationship with Baku was a precondition which was virtually laid down by the Karabakhis. On the other hand, Armenia’s government has advocated a confederal or federal solution. For this reason, the Azerbaijani government also stipulated a precondition for the negotiations which was the acceptance of its territorial integrity. Neither the Karabakhis nor the Azerbaijani authorities will compromise over their preconditions, hence the deadlock.¹³⁷

Finally, it must be said that, although in the peace process, including the multilateral negotiations in the presence of mediators and face-to-face talks between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, little information was made public and the idea of a compromise between the conflicting parties as regards their fundamental positions seems improbable. The remarks about the need to resume negotiations from “point zero”, made by Ilham Aliyev, the Azerbaijani President, after taking office in October 2003, adds to this belief.

According to the statements of Velayat Guliev, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, the opposing parties have not reached any full agreement on any principle. Therefore, Azerbaijan has the right to resume negotiations from point zero. This indicates that a settlement is still a distant one.¹³⁸

Vartan Oskanian, the Armenian Foreign Minister announced in 2004, that as before, the stances of Yerevan and Baku are different.¹³⁹ It was only to be

expected that in the two rounds of negotiations between Ilham Aliev and his Armenian counterpart on 10th - 11th February 2006, nobody envisaged any progress. In other words, it is improbable that they arrived at any agreement during that time. Thus, in the present circumstances, the status of the conflict is the same as the time when it began and the positions of the parties have not shifted. But some political observers and mediators believe that in the last round of negotiations between the Azerbaijani ex-President and his Armenian counterpart, especially in Key West, they achieved some progress and reached some conclusions.¹⁴⁰

However, because one of the Presidents did not observe the agreements, they were abandoned, so the two sides must resume the peace talks with this difference that the demands and goals of the conflicting parties will not be able to accomplish as much as today's.

Conclusion

It is fair to conclude that this conflict has stifled the social and economic status of Armenia and Azerbaijan for over two decades and this situation seems set to continue for the foreseeable future for the people of these two countries. Both countries, but particularly Azerbaijan, are centralized states, and corruption, lack of transparency, poverty, the security of the refugees, unemployment and migration are the main problems. The refugees still depend on international organizations for support and most Azeri refugees are still displaced. The most significant issues related to this conflict such as

occupied territories, refugees and security are not answered and solved and there is no political will to bring about a final solution.

One of the peculiarities of this dispute is that there are disagreements over which countries are actually involved. This is the main reason why the conflict has not undergone a clear legal and political assessment by the corresponding international organizations and scholars. There is no clear definition as to whether this conflict is intra- or inter-state. To be able to address the fundamental problems of this conflict there is a need for a clear explanation of the interests of the different parties involved in the clash, which we have seen above.

Armenia has indicated that the conflict is between Azerbaijan and the Armenians living in the NK region. Based on this thesis, the Armenian government has refused to recognize the independence of NK and has also stated that it agrees with any resolution that is accepted by the Karabakhis.

The Azeris, on the other hand, do not agree with this position. They believe Armenia is directly involved in this conflict and they identify Armenia as an aggressor. As the late Azerbaijani President indicated in December 1997: “Azerbaijan will not acknowledge Karabakh Armenians as an entity separate from Armenia.”¹⁴¹

In 1997 the Step-by-Step plan was proposed by the OSCE calling for the withdrawal of Armenians from the occupied Azeri territories except for Lachin

which links NK with Armenia. In addition, this proposal demanded a full return of refugees and the lifting of economic embargoes before the negotiations regarding the status of Karabakh could proceed.

Azerbaijan and, after some hesitation, Armenia both accepted the plan, but the Karabakh Armenian authorities rejected this proposal and demanded that the independence and security of NK should be guaranteed before any talks could start.¹⁴²

President Ter-Petrosian accepted this proposal and by doing so caused a lot of controversy and protest in Armenia. These demonstrations were a major contributory factor to his resignation in 1997 and resulted in the election of Robert Kocharian who had earlier served as head of Government in Karabakh and as Prime Minister of Armenia in 1998.

The Armenians occupied certain territories of Azerbaijan to use as a bargaining tool in the negotiations to gain independence for NK. Armenia faces internal and external obstacles in defining its national security and independent foreign policy. NK, Russia and Iran are the main external obstacles.

The presence of hardliners in the Armenian Government indicates that there will be no acceptance of any plans which would provide territorial integrity for Azerbaijan and compromise the independence of NK. It is also important to consider the issues related to the internal security of Armenia.

In October 1999, there was a serious incident in Yerevan in which two gunmen entered the Parliament building, shooting the Prime-Minister Vezgen Sarkisian and other politicians, including the former Presidential candidate Karen Demirchian.¹⁴³ These two figures were among the most powerful politicians in Armenia. The gunmen were individual terrorists and they didn't claim affiliation to any group, although the leader of the assault was identified as a previous member of the ARF (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). This party however denied carrying out the attack.

The national security strategy of the Armenian government reveals the basic need of the state for survival, perceiving itself as an isolated country in a hostile environment and resorting to external assistance as a way of strengthening its position.¹⁴⁴

The Armenians have had a number of disputes with the Azeris over the years. Between 1988 and 1990 - initially in Sumgait, a city close to Baku - and later in Baku itself where Armenians were beaten and murdered. The Armenians also count the 1915 genocide when one and a half million of them were killed in Ottoman Turkey. These historical factors influence their perceptions and their security concerns in the conflict. The Armenians almost always refer to Azerbaijanis as Turks.

This is why the Armenians are so concerned about their security and insist on self-determination and the formation of an independent state. The problem of

status is their priority in solving the dispute and they believe they should be recognized as an independent state under international law.

Just like other CIS countries, Russia has a great military presence in Armenia and uses its energy and power and growing financial capacity to reassert its influence. Russian capital has been invested in Armenian telecommunications, the banking system and electricity and gas networks.¹⁴⁵

Azerbaijan has also been afflicted by economic conditions as a result of the NK conflict, and if the “no war, no peace” stalemate continues, there will be no hope, especially for Armenia of improving its economic circumstances. The NK struggle has made the creation of a larger, regional market for goods that could be produced in Armenia impossible.¹⁴⁶

Such a heavy Russian presence in Armenia has been repeatedly denounced by the opposition who believe that “the Armenian authorities are trying to preserve their illegitimate power by selling the nation’s economic facilities.”¹⁴⁷

The former Russian representative to the Minsk Group, Mr Kazimirov, on 25th April 2002, at the conference on the Formation of Environments for Peace, Stability and Trust in the South Caucasus, stated that he had always warned the parties involved in the dispute that “God forbid that you should seek a solution in the sphere of law. It is a deadlock. The solution can be found in the political sphere only. Like it or not, the solution of the Karabakh conflict will never be purely juridical; it is likely to be mostly political.”¹⁴⁸ This is a clear

indication of the Russian position because Kazimirov was at the centre of Russian policy during this conflict.

The Republic of Azerbaijan has been able to access additional funds through rising oil production. This economic imbalance between the two countries certainly has the potential to alter the balance of power in favour of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said in 2004: "I believe we should not be in a hurry, we should wait... Azerbaijan will achieve what it desires by consolidating the country's economic potential and settling problems connected with this."¹⁴⁹

The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline has been a triumph for Azerbaijan, not only in helping the economic development of the country but also in its foreign policy. As a non-OPEC source of energy, Azerbaijan will contribute to the European energy market. The Baku-Ceyhan pipeline contract also enhances the role of Azerbaijan in the region. The Azeri authorities believe that this pipeline, which became operational in May 2006, will receive support from both the US and Europe and will help to strengthen the integrity of their state.

The construction of the pipeline began in September 2002 and was inaugurated in mid July. The pipeline has a capacity of 1 billion barrels of oil per day. The route is from Azerbaijan, passing through Georgia and Turkey. The total length of the pipeline is 1,760km. the cost of building the pipeline was \$3.9 billion (US). The decision to build the pipeline was taken on 18th November 1999 at the OSCE meeting in Istanbul

This pipeline promotes competition and diversity by circumventing Iran and Russia. The route through Iran and Russia could give them strong economic and political leverage. Igor Ivanov said in the Eurasia summit, in New York that the pipeline is commercially unprofitable because Azerbaijan does not have enough oil for the pipeline. The US was clearly against any route through Iran and any Iranian participation. Iran was opposed because of its national interest was threatened and the pipeline could affect the balance of power.

The pipeline weakened Russian influence in the Caucasus region and it has been a counterbalance to Iranian and Russian influence in the region.

The security of this pipeline and the vast gas and oil resources of the region are very important to both the European Union and the US who believe that oil and gas development can only be secured with peace and stability. The Russians and Iranians opposed the contracts. Why did they fail to stop the project? They argued that the Baku-Ceyhan had no chance to be operational and Iran warned the Azeris that the legal status of the Caspian Sea should be agreed upon prior to any exploration help for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

The most visible sign of agreement between the US, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, was expected to lead to a countervailing union between Russia, Armenia and Iran.¹⁵⁰ The different strategic interests of the Russian

Federation and the European Union and the United States are very substantial in the Caucasus. Although the conflict is frozen, it could still degenerate into war.

Chapter 4: Nagorno Karabakh Geo-Politics: Interests and Politics of Outsiders

Introduction

Transcaucasia, or the Caucasus, is one of the most geopolitical, geo-strategic, ethnographical, historical, and cultural regions in the world, and is home to over 50 ethnic nationalities. Comprising a surface area of 440,700 sq/km, the Caucasus is situated between Russia to the north, the Black Sea to the west, the Caspian Sea to the east, and Iran and Turkey to the south. Located on the peripheries of Armenia, Turkey and Russia, the region has for centuries been an arena for expansionism and political, military, religious and cultural rivalries. During its history the Caucasus was incorporated into the Iranian world. 180,000 Armenians citizens live in Iran and the two countries have cooperated in many areas, including the building of a permanent bridge on the Aras River connecting the two countries, an electricity network link, and the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to Armenia. Armenia's main transport route is via Iran, as both the Turkish and Azerbaijani borders are blocked. The other transport route, which is of low quality, is through Georgia.

More than 20 million Azeris live in Iran, over three times the entire population of Azerbaijan. The people of both countries are predominantly Shia Muslims and culturally they have much in common. When the Armenians attacked Nakhijevan in May 1992, Iranian Azeris demonstrated against Armenia. Iran has different views concerning Azerbaijani relations with NATO, Israel and

the US, as well as the exploitation of oil from the Caspian Sea and the pipeline route. In July 2001 Iranian fighters and warships threatened an Azeri research ship, operating under contract with British Petroleum in the Caspian Sea.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian Empire conquered the territory from the Qajars.¹⁵¹ The historical name of the Caucasus is Transcaucasia, from the Russian word *zakavkazie*, "the area beyond the Caucasus Mountains". These mountains divide the southern area from the north, which is part of Russia.

The southern part comprises the sovereign republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This region serves as a bridge between Asia and Europe and is located at the centre of the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia), which was initiated in May 1993 at a conference in Brussels. It runs from London to Tokyo following the Silk Road, the cheapest and shortest route between the Far East and Europe. It was financed by the EU under the TACIS programme. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union, the region has turned to ethno-nationalism and conflict. At present, there are two disputes in Georgia and one in NK. Ethno-political rivalry has traditionally been at the centre of Caucasian politics: "The internal conflict, fragmentation, and marginality tendencies encouraged and exploited by its larger neighbours."¹⁵² Because of their historic, linguistic and cultural similarities, Azerbaijan has considerable economic, cultural, political and trade relations with Turkey as

well as with Iran. Turkey has no diplomatic relations with Armenia and supports Azerbaijan in the NK conflict.

The rivalries in this region are so unique that Jones has identified three types: firstly, between the regional hegemony of Iran, Turkey, and Russia; secondly between the Caucasian states themselves; and thirdly between the nations within the states.¹⁵³ Other powers like the US and EU also have stakes in the region. It is an arena of inter-relationships and of different political, security and economic interests, none of which are integrated.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has changed and reshaped the political and economic landscape and the security of the Caucasus. Knowledge of the political and economic games, as well as an understanding of the interests of the players in the conflict is necessary in order to propose a settlement of the disputes.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, powers from near and far were attracted to the Caucasus and rivalled each other in an attempt to influence the area. Regional developments and especially the existing hostilities were the chief pretext for the powers to impose their presence. It is only natural that the NK conflict should be the focus of outsiders' attention because of its geopolitical and sensitive location in the Caucasus. This remains true to such an extent it can be argued that the settlement of the conflict depends on finalizing the conditions governing the sphere of influence of each power in

the region. In other words, the role of outsiders in the NK conflict will not only determine the result of the disagreement but also the destiny of the region.

It is clear that each power has entered the Caucasus with its own interests and strategic goals. Furthermore, outsiders' perceptions differ regarding the regional issues. Because the powers have such contradictory concerns, victory for one will result in the exclusion of its rivals. The destiny of the region and its current issues, particularly the NK conflict, will correspond to the ambitions of that particular outsider.

It is questionable whether Russia, Iran, and Turkey, the US, Europe and the UN have all played a substantial role in the conflict. Nevertheless, they have had either a direct or an indirect influence on the peace process. In this chapter, therefore, the importance of the Caucasus and the positions of Russia, Iran and Turkey towards Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK are discussed and it will explore the strategy of the US government and the OSCE towards the NK conflict.

The Russian Federation

The Transcaucasus has been a region of vital strategic interest to Russia since the 7th century. After two centuries of competition between Persia and Ottoman Turkey for influence in the region, the area was absorbed into the Tsarist Russian Empire in the 19th century. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the three republics of the Caucasus,

Russia, which dominated the region for nearly 200 years, considers it the most vital part of its national security and calls it the “backyard” of its country. The interests of Tsarist Russia were originally geopolitical and strategic, i.e. geopolitically the Caucasus has a unique role as a natural barrier for Russia with its Muslim rivals, and secondly economic, because Baku evolved during the second half of the 19th century into one of the world’s most important oil resources. These Russian advantages have remained constant and are still relevant today.¹⁵⁴

However, factors such as weak management, security problems, a crisis in the racial-religious groups, economic problems, poverty, joblessness and unsuccessful rivalry with the west have caused vital parts of the Trans-Caucasus to leave the Russian sphere of influence. Only Armenia remains as the last secure bastion in the Caucasus region. This has forced Russia to pay far too much attention to Armenia as a strategic ally and to protect and help the Armenians, especially in the NK conflict.

Unlike in the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, from 1992 the Moscow authorities made efforts to present a harmonious picture to the West, but it was not long before geopolitical realities put paid to this image. Robert Barlyski’s “From Atlanticist Idealism to Eurasian Realism” found expression *inter alia* in the shift away from a concentration on relations with the West towards assigning greater importance to Russia’s evolving policy towards Turkey and Iran.¹⁵⁵ Most newly independent states were grouped under the organization of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), for a variety

of reasons but especially because of pressure from Russia. The Russian authorities compared their presence and interests in the neighbouring republics to the role and position of the US in Central America. In fact, they talked about a kind of “Russian Monroe”. According to this, Moscow intends to act as a stabilizer and redresser of the balance between the republics separated from the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁶ Thus, according to the Russians, the separated republics of the Soviet Union were to remain under Russia’s sphere of influence. It should be noted that the Russian Monroe Doctrine is based on the following guidelines:

- To protect Russian minorities beyond the framework defined by international law, which includes recognizing Russia’s right to support those Russian minorities who live in the independent states of the region; recognizing equal rights for Russian-speaking residents in the republics; accepting dual citizenship for them and also the equality of the Russian language and the native languages in the republics.
- To support the traditional economic union as a lever exerting economic pressure to achieve political goals.
- To continue paying the enormous subsidy (despite internal problems) and even offering sums greater than Russia’s financial aid during the years before 1989, so that while Russia herself would receive just 10 billion dollars from western sources in 1992, the Commonwealth States and the Caucasus would collect a sum of 17 billion dollars credit from Russia.¹⁵⁷

- To protect Russia's interests in the oil and gas fields by controlling the pipelines and communications and by preventing the creation of parallel transportation routes.
- To use military intervention in the form of peacekeeping forces in the racial and political conflicts of the region.
- To warn foreign countries not to interfere in Russia's sphere of influence.¹⁵⁸

It is clear that to Russia, the position of the Caucasus is different from that of other parts of the region. It is called "the heart of Russia" because of its geopolitical importance and the special role it fulfils in Russia's national security as its natural southern border. Thus it is imperative for the Russians to implement their 'Monroe Doctrine' with more sensitivity and precision in the Caucasus.

Consequently Russia has designated the Caucasus as part of its domain and announced explicitly that Moscow has vital interests there. Over the last few years the Russians have resorted to using political, economic and military leverage to extend their influence in the region. The Trans-Caucasus has been a zone of vital strategic interest to Russia since the 17th century. However, the real reason for Russia's power and influence must not be attributed entirely to re-establishing its past Empire, but relates to interests and concerns created after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite economic and political problems, Russia has a strong interest in maintaining

and developing its influence in the region. A few of the reasons are listed below:

Strategic and Security Considerations

The Caucasus enjoys high strategic priority for Russia, since its concern about the region springs from economic considerations and relates to the protection of its identity. In fact, Russia's policy in Chechnya showed that it is prepared to resort to military measures to maintain its security and integrity. Thus the sensitivity towards foreign and neighbouring regions and the recourse to similar actions to preserve its security in the region are predictable. Russia is aware that the Caucasus has a vital role in the perpetuation of the Russian Federation, so any unusual developments there are regarded as tantamount to putting the security and territorial integrity of the state at risk.

As for the importance of the Caucasus, in creating and consolidating its security doctrine Russia has made every effort to take advantage of the crisis in the Caucasus to develop its influence and to strengthen its bases and military presence. Furthermore, through actions such as developing strike forces, organizing frontier guards and establishing new military bases in the Caucasus, it has made its military presence more powerful.¹⁵⁹

Economic Considerations

The Caucasus is also vital for Russia in economic terms and the main issue is “oil”. Russia views its hegemony as essential to allow the exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas from the Caspian.¹⁶⁰ Oil is important to Russians in three ways: first, the Russian oil structure ties in with this region; second, the presence of foreign elements during the exploitation and exploration operations; and third, the position of oil exploitation in supplying the international markets.¹⁶¹

The Caucasus Transportation Role for Russia

The Caucasus is a key corridor and transportation route linking Russia to the sea. In some ways this is a strategic advantage. Firstly Russia, unlike the Soviet Union, has a limited shoreline on the Black Sea; secondly, the Black Sea joins the Mediterranean by way of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles; and thirdly, the Caucasus is the key to Russian relations with the Middle East. In comparison to the Soviet Union, Russia has less influence and power in the Middle East. However, it has interests there, and the Caucasus provides key access to that area.¹⁶²

Russians’ Racial Ties in the Region

The presence of about 25 million Russians in the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus, who occupy sensitive positions, is an important factor in

maintaining Russian influence in the region. Thus supporting Russian citizens and their interests is very important to Russia.¹⁶³

To Fill the Power Vacuum

The collapse of the Soviet Union left a power vacuum in the region. It caused the regional and supra-regional states to make extensive efforts to exert influence in the area considered by the Russians to be a vital component of their interests, creating an intolerable situation for Russia. Through political, economic and military means, Russia showed an interest in dominating the region. The remarks of Boris Yeltsin at the beginning of 1994 were an example of this attempt to fill the power vacuum: “Historically and economically we are joined so that in practice we cannot live separately and we all share the same destiny.”¹⁶⁴

It is clear that Russia has had different goals and interests in the region at various times: both in the short- and the long-term, for instance by using economic or political tools to impose its influence on neighbouring Asian countries and states in strategic and economic positions, such as Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan. Even after the evacuation of their army from the area, the maintenance of a significant military presence must be considered a long-term strategic goal for the Russians.¹⁶⁵

Russia’s relations with the former republics, i.e. the newly independent states during recent years clearly show the constant efforts made by Moscow to

retain an all-out connection and to create and foster a new network of mutual relations. At the same time, by using this effective lever it has always sought to confront the influence of outsiders in the region.¹⁶⁶ Russia's prevention of Turkey from intervening in the NK conflict and its warning that military intervention in the Caucasus by Turkey might lead to World War III shows that Russia does not tolerate the interference of other states in a region it considers its own domain. For example, Mikhail Demurin, the spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry, stated in 1992 that Russia was responsible for establishing peace and stability in the region, as well as improving the living conditions of the people who lived either in Russia or in the neighbouring states, while preserving their territorial integrity.¹⁶⁷

As for Russia's leverage, the state uses various forms of enforcement in the region, the most important and effective of which is military pressure. Considering that Russia possesses the greatest army and military might in the area, and that the newly independent republics lack the necessary power to protect their borders, this is the most significant lever and the main tool for developing Russian foreign policy within the CIS community. While international and regional organizations avoid areas of crisis and conflict, Russia maintains a presence in the region to increase its credit and influence, even though it may suffer losses and casualties.¹⁶⁸ Not only does the Red Army protect the borders of these republics, but it is also deployed in all the sensitive locations inside these states. This military cooperation is based on a mutual agreement signed by Russia and each of the republics in the locality.¹⁶⁹ It is evident that any movement that is in the least contradictory to

Russia's interests will be severely suppressed. The most obvious examples of Russia's military intervention in the area include its naked presence in Tajikistan, its military interference in the NK conflict, and its support for Abkhazian separatists in Georgia. In addition, Russia is active in countries which have no intention of joining the CIS Union or fail to follow Russia's regional policy, and it has used these instruments whenever required.¹⁷⁰

The economic structure and ties with the republics are other significant mechanisms on which Russia relies to keep these republics dependent. When the economic system of the Soviet Union was united and interdependent and the republics were not able to enter the global market because of monetary problems, they had to create economic links within their former union. Thus all these republics need each other and depend on Russia as the heart of their unity. Under present conditions, the foundation of economic and productive business lies in Russia and the lines of communication - railways, roads and pipelines - end up there. Controlling the economy of the republics is in the hands of the Russians and they use it to augment their influence.

Political policy is another tool that serves Russian diplomacy in the region. Russia has been successful in creating a political apparatus in these states by supporting Russian-oriented statesmen and the former communist authorities in the republics and helping them to gain positions of power.

Another practice that Russia uses to strengthen its influence in the republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus is the threat to break up the territory of the republics that have been separated. Russia has an undeniable presence in the crisis regions that want to withdraw from the republics, such as Abkhazia and Northern Ossetia in the Republic of Georgia. Examples of Russia's interference in the affairs of regional states are the riots in Dinstain located in the Republic of Moldova, the Crimean trouble in the Ukraine, the NK crisis and the provocation of the tribes and nationalities residing in Azerbaijan like the Talysh, as well as the inhabitants of Khojand (the second largest city of Tajikistan), who have shown separatist and autonomous tendencies. Russia threatens them with the disintegration of their country in order to ensure that they agree with Russia's regional policies.¹⁷¹

Against this background, we can examine Russia's role in the NK conflict.

Russia's Position regarding the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

During the past decade, the crisis has been an important arena demonstrating Russia's regional policy. It has provided Russia with a pretext to force the parties in dispute to conform to its interests. Russia thereby prevents regional and supra-regional outsiders from implementing their plans in Azerbaijan and Armenia during the peace process. At the same time, the western outsiders who are aware of this have made every endeavor to wrest this tool from Russia's hands. Thus the NK conflict has become an important arena in which to analyse the interests of Russia and the West.

The hypothesis that the NK conflict serves Russia's diplomacy in the region, and for that reason it does not seek to settle the conflict and establish peace and stability there, is widely accepted by analysts. Most analysts believe that despite the many efforts that have apparently been made by the Russians to resolve the NK conflict, Russia herself is an obstacle towards achieving peace between the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, because all the measures carried out by different states and organizations to establish a ceasefire have been aborted by Russia, whose objective in the conflict is to safeguard its own interests in the region.¹⁷²

An analysis of Russia's policies regarding NK reveals the following:

- Russia refrains officially from accepting either the annexation of NK by Armenia or its independence. It calls for the keeping of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.
- Russia, as one of the three chairmen of the Minsk group, is officially obliged to act as a neutral peacekeeper in respect of the NK crisis. Therefore Russia's backing of Armenia cannot be interpreted as official support for Armenia over the NK crisis, but is due to its desire to establish friendly ties with a member of the CIS in order to promote peace in the region. Besides, Russia does not intend to champion the separation of NK from Azerbaijan by promoting Armenia.
- The Russian authorities are trying to prevent their relations with Azerbaijan from being unnecessarily spoiled because of their granting aid to the Armenians. Otherwise Russia's presence in the peace process

would be denied and this would mean an arena of no competition for the West.

- At present, Russia may intend to obstruct the NK dispute in order to confuse the Republic of Azerbaijan into entering a security scheme and to show the regional conditions as critical. In this way Russia can justify its presence in Armenia and also the need to bring back its troops to Azerbaijan to restore security there.

It should be mentioned that the Russian stance on the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia does not follow the same process. In fact the posture adopted by Russia regarding the NK conflict depends upon its interests, internal developments in the region, and the attitudes and perspectives of outsiders. Thus in order to explain Russia's position precisely, it is necessary to analyze separately its behaviour towards Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Russia's Position regarding the Republic of Armenia

Throughout history Armenia has played a special role in preparing the ground for Russians expansionism in the Caucasus and the Trans-Caucasus. Russia therefore has a historically positive approach towards the Armenians. In all the wars over the Caucasus and the Trans-Caucasus involving Russia, Armenia has welcomed it and indeed actively helped it, especially in the war against the Ottomans and Iran. Moreover, Armenians fought side by side with Russian troops on the battlefields of the Crimean war (1768-1774) and their officers showed courage in the mid 19th century wars in the northern

Caucasus and Dagestan, which led to Russian dominance over those regions.¹⁷³ Because of its historical loyalty towards the Russians, the Republic of Armenia, on independence, strenuously tried to attract Moscow's attention regarding its role and their old special relationship, while taking into account Russia's fundamental security and military and economic weaknesses. Of the three Trans-Caucasian Soviet successor states, Armenia has proved the most amenable to building a reasonably harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship with Russia within the parameters of the CIS.¹⁷⁴ It was one of the first states to become a member of the union of the CIS and it never intended to reject the Russians or to suspend its dependency on them (Armenia became a member of the CIS on 26 December 1991, and on 15 May 1992, it signed the Tashkent agreement.)¹⁷⁵

For Armenia, in a region where security is a luxury, Russia's role in ensuring it is critical. This is why Armenia accepts the basing of Russian forces on its soil and the patrolling of its borders with Turkey and Iran.¹⁷⁶ During the past decade the Armenians have tried to increase their cooperation with Russia. One US commentator has gone so far as to describe this as a patron-client relationship.¹⁷⁷ However, although the two states have become strategically allied, the author believes that Armenia worries about the potential loss of Russian support because of a long-term involvement with Azerbaijan and Turkey. But as mentioned before, for reasons such as military dependency during the conflict with Azerbaijan and a growing distrust of Turkey, and because Armenia was economically heavily dependent on Russia for fuel, raw materials for industry and basic foods, it was inclined to be pro-

Russian.¹⁷⁸ It was when the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted a right-about-face policy towards Russian interests during this period that it inclined to the West and Turkey. The Azeris openly excluded the Russians from their country by entrusting the Caspian Sea resources to Western companies, paving the way for Russia to support Armenia overtly in the NK conflict. This political aid for the Armenians sometimes resulted in Russia's blatant interference in the NK conflict against the Azeris. It has been claimed, for example, that Russian troops from the 366th regiment, who participated in the attack on the Azerbaijani village of Khojali at a turning point in the NK conflict, played an effective role in killing the Azeris and supporting the Armenians.¹⁷⁹ There is one further aspect to the Russian strategic/military policy in Armenia that is of relevance, namely the use of Armenian forces as a component of Russian policy in Azerbaijan.¹⁸⁰

In 1994, Moscow's support for the Armenians was proven. When Moscow's peace plan was rejected by Azerbaijan, Vladimir Kazmirev, Yeltsin's envoy in Karabakh, criticized the Baku policy and warned of an imminent occupation of other Azerbaijani territories by the Armenians forces which, after being given the "green light", attacked and occupied some parts of this country.¹⁸¹ We should also mention the Russian military and human contributions to Armenia. The Republic of Azerbaijan frequently accused Russia of helping the Armenians militarily by providing them with Russian weaponry worth one billion dollars from 1993 to 1996. This was condemned by the international community, especially the Islamic governments. Moscow's upholding of the Armenian position in Karabakh, which called for its direct presence in the

negotiations as a main party in the conflict, is another example of Russian support for Armenia. This was why the Baku authorities in 1994 considered Armenia to be their ally in the struggle and, since they considered this dispute to be a local problem in their country, they rejected the participation of the Karabakh representative in the negotiations in order to prevent legitimizing the Karabakhis. Finally however, under severe pressure from Moscow the Republic of Azerbaijan was forced to accept the Karabakh spokesman in the meetings concerning a ceasefire at the Bishkek summit. Although Baku accepted them without signatories, their presence at that time was considered to be a step forward in the settlement process.¹⁸²

Russia's Position over the Republic of Azerbaijan

During the period of Russian sovereignty over Azerbaijan, religious differences were always a factor causing conflict in Russo-Azeri relations. Even Russia's closeness to the Azeris while it was ruling the Soviet Union, and when it was trying to use Azerbaijan as a base to develop its influence over the Islamic states, particularly Iran and Turkey, did not remove the Azeris' and Russians' negative memories of each other. Over time Azeri distrust of Russia increased, especially when it clashed with Armenia over a number of regions such as Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan. The Azerbaijanis became suspicious of Moscow, and on examining Russia's cautious policymaking came to the conclusion that the latter intended to support Armenia instead of Azerbaijan. This gave rise to deep anxiety among the Azeris and a hidden indignation towards Russia. The Red Army's attack

on Baku in January 1990, which caused many Azeri casualties, turned their veiled anger into open resentment and paved the way for Azerbaijan to revolt against the Communist party, becoming the first country in the Soviet Union to declare its independence.¹⁸³

Besides the religious differences that were the main factor in distancing Azerbaijan from Russia and bringing it closer to the Islamic world, language was another compelling reason for Azerbaijan to reject Russia in favour of Turkey. When Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, warning bells rang in Russia. At that time, Russia considered the power vacuum in the region to be a threat, and felt that other countries wanted to influence its traditional domain. Russia interpreted the stability and peace in the Caucasus as an invitation to both neighbouring and distant rivals to enter the area and strengthen their bases there. Because of its geopolitical position and rich energy resources, the Republic of Azerbaijan represents a great attraction for the regional and supra-regional powers. For this reason, the Russians have always considered Azerbaijan the “achilles’ heel” of their sphere of influence.¹⁸⁴ It is also perceived as the ‘key’ to the increase of Turkish penetration into the former USSR. Thus overt and excessive orientation towards Turkey on the part of the Azerbaijani leadership was to be discouraged. Russia was also attracted to Azerbaijan on account of its oil resources and aimed to participate in its energy exploitation and put the transportation system on a sound footing.¹⁸⁵

To Moscow, the Republic of Azerbaijan is seen as an unreliable republic because it acts mostly without regard for Russia's interests. Russia believes that Azerbaijan is preparing the ground for rivals to encroach on Russia's political domain. Since the Azeris believe Russia is historically an ally of Armenia, they naturally seek their own ally. This is an invitation for other parties to trespass on the Russian sphere of influence, which is unacceptable to Russia.¹⁸⁶

However, it should not be supposed that Russia has always been opposed to the Azerbaijani position in the conflict. As mentioned earlier, Russia's view of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the settlement of the NK conflict has not always been the same. In fact, Russia adopted a friendly attitude towards Azerbaijan when they saw that the behaviour of the Azeris was to their advantage, or while it did not pose a threat to their interests in the region. In contrast, whenever Azerbaijani policies have been against Russian interests, especially over the presence of Russia's rivals in the region, Russia has assumed a hostile stance towards the Azeris.

The Russian outlook towards the Republic of Azerbaijan after its independence can be divided into four periods. The first was from 1994 to March 1992, during the presidency of Ayaz Mutalibev. At that time, cooperation with Azerbaijan was on Russia's agenda. Russia could not ignore Azerbaijan, which enjoys significant and geopolitical importance and also possesses large gas and oil resources. Moreover, in that period about 500,000 Russians were stationed there. After the pro-Russian authorities took

office in Baku, all the conditions favoured the establishing of a special relationship and the preserving of a constructive atmosphere. During that time, Moscow embraced a policy based on supporting the Azeri position over Karabakh. At the same time, the Armenians claimed that Russia's support of Azerbaijan had prevented the fulfilment of their former goal for the unification of NK with Armenia. Armenia believed that when Armenian troops were making progress on the battlefield, Russia prevented them from further victories by pressurizing them politically and by supplying the Azeri troops with military equipment.¹⁸⁷

The second period dates from June 1992 to July 1993, coinciding with the advent of the Popular Front in Azerbaijan, but when this party stepped down, Russian policy changed. In this phase, Azerbaijani oil resources were invested in western companies and Russian interests were ignored. Moreover, Russian minorities were regarded as second-class citizens. The measures taken by the Azeris thus paved the way for greater intervention by the West and Turkey in the Caucasus, putting the traditional Russian geopolitical sphere at risk. At the time Russia was trying to restore its past reputation in the region by organizing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which was founded in December 1991. Therefore it would not agree under any circumstances to recognize a government with such anti-Russian and pro-Turkish and western orientation. The Azerbaijani authorities expressed their opposition towards the Russian plan to organize the Commonwealth Society and refrained from joining.

Moscow used political and economic factors together with the Karabakh crisis as two pressure points to undermine the anti-Russian policies of the Popular Front.¹⁸⁸ For that reason they set up and carried out difficult policies for trading and customs in their relations with the Azeris. Furthermore Russia supported Armenia militarily in the NK dispute, particularly in the 1992 winter operations, which led to the occupation of Lachin and Shusha. Russia also used its political leverage to interfere in local affairs and tacitly encouraged nascent separatist movements among the Lezgins, the Talysh and the Iranian minority living in the extreme south-east of Azerbaijan. They continued these measures up to the time of the disintegration of Azerbaijan (the Talysh self-styled leader subsequently took advantage of the Hoseinev revolt to proclaim an independent republic).¹⁸⁹ It is almost certain that they were behind Abulfazl Elchibey's downfall in planning a coup with Suret Hoseinev.¹⁹⁰ Some have suggested that the Russians had a hand in ousting Elchibey, thereby thwarting the signing in late June of the long-awaited agreement in London between the Azerbaijani leadership and the western oil companies on joint exploitation of three Caspian oilfields.¹⁹¹ However, separatist movements among the minorities led by Russia subsequently resulted in it losing the initiative on the battlefield. While the Azeri troops were disunited, the Armenian forces were unified and better organized and, by intensifying their attacks, they succeeded in occupying new territories in Azerbaijan.

Most analysts of Russian policy in the Caucasus, particularly western commentators, believe that Russia ostensibly intervened to topple Elchibey's government by organizing revolts in various Azerbaijani cities and

encouraging the Armenians to intensify their attacks in order to undermine the Popular Front's power. During the rule of the Popular Front, the Azerbaijani Lezgins, backed by Moscow, organized a group called "Sadval" in order to gain their autonomy. Within an hour of the group being set up after Elchibey's downfall, Sadval was banned by Moscow and the Talysh-Mugam Republic was dissolved.¹⁹² After Aliev swept to power, all anti-Azerbaijani propaganda by the Russian media came to an end and they were ordered to use the term "NK" instead of "The Republic of NK."¹⁹³

Thus the third period of Russian ascendancy began with the dismissal of Elchibey in July 1993 and Heydar Aliev's assumption of power, and ended with the signing in September 1994 of the agreement to grant the oil concession to the western companies. In this phase, Aliev tried to show his loyalty to Russia and adopted and implemented several Russian policies. His decisions included the revision of the Azerbaijani plan accepting membership of the CIS, and the announcement that the agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the western companies was illegal. However, although Aliev was under considerable domestic pressure as a result of the ongoing Armenian offensive that had created several hundred thousand Azerbaijani refugees, he repeatedly refused at that juncture to agree to the stationing of Russian troops in Azerbaijan on a permanent basis and to the deployment of Russian border guards along the Azerbaijan-Iranian frontier.¹⁹⁴

However, in addition to concessions granted to Azerbaijan, Russia forced the Armenians to cease their offensive, and in the meantime sent arms to the

Azeris to help them liberate their occupied territories. In November, Kozyrev threatened the Karabakh Armenians with retaliation if they did not stop their activities. Russia also sent 200 military “advisors” to help the Azerbaijani army.¹⁹⁵ The changes in Russian policy are shown by the Azeris’ major victories, which coincided with Aliev’s arrival, and the defeat of the Armenian offensive.¹⁹⁶

The fourth period commenced on 20th September 1994, when the oil agreement was concluded between Azerbaijan and the European and US oil companies, and has continued up to the present. In this period, Aliev developed his foreign policy goals and responded to domestic problems such as the NK dispute by relying on the oil factor as a weapon. As soon as he had consolidated his power, he revealed his intentions for independence in the face of Russian dominance. Russia had actually prevented Azerbaijan from achieving its aims by applying its own policies. Russia also created many problems for Azerbaijan so that its political stability would not be secured. It can well be imagined then that the stalemate in the Karabakh conflict and its conversion into a regional crisis depended largely on the oil factor in the Republic of Azerbaijan.¹⁹⁷ Some analysts predicted that the Popular Front’s mavericks in the Republic of Azerbaijan would be eliminated with Aliev’s rise to power, and Baku would orient itself politically towards Russian regional and supra-regional interests. Initial evidence supported this idea, but time proved the hypothesis to be false. Although the tense Russo-Azeri relations ended when Aliev came to power, a few years later, in June 1993 he tried to distance Azerbaijan from Russian dominance.

Thus Aliev moved towards independence by signing an oil contract with western companies. This was met by Moscow's objections and quickly earned the name "Contract of the Century" due to its groundbreaking character and huge financial value.¹⁹⁸ In reaction against this, Russia issued a strongly worded manifesto calling for the implementation of the measures needed to sustain their rights and interests in the region. Russia then took a series of steps to encourage Baku to follow Moscow's regional policies. For example, it has been claimed that two high government officials, who played a prominent role in drawing up and signing the contract, were assassinated (Afieddin Jalilev, the deputy speaker of the National Parliament and Shamsi Rahimev, the special head of the Presidents office) as well as four political opponents of President Aliev, incarcerated on charges of treason. Some of these, who were reputed to be close to Moscow, escaped from custody.¹⁹⁹ A coup staged by Suret Hoseinev and others indicates the degree of Russian interference during this period.

Russia resorted to other actions:

- Encouraging the Armenians to attack and occupy extensive areas of Azerbaijan
- Strengthening their naval base in the western basin of the Caspian Sea
- Cooperating with Iran in order to put Aliev under pressure
- Pressurizing Baku to repay its dues to Moscow
- Encouraging Abulfazl Elchibey and Colonel Hematev to detach Nakhichevan and Talysh from Azerbaijani territory

- Finally the Russian experts who worked in the Azerbaijani oil industries left Azerbaijan. (Washington Post Tuesday, October 11th 1994. By Lally Weymouth)

The second factor leading to the aggravation of Russo-Azeri relations was the Azeris' opposition to Russia's proposals to deploy their troops as peacekeepers in the warring zones. Despite Russian pressure, Azerbaijan rejected this and stipulated as a condition the presence of other forces alongside Russian troops. Russia threatened to intervene militarily in order to restrain the hostile parties and also to terminate the conflict and establish peace in the region.²⁰⁰ In this period we therefore observe tensions between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Russia. It is likely that this state of affairs will continue in the future if Azerbaijan does not change its policy.

Finally, regarding Russian opposition to the presence of other regional and supra-regional outsiders and the tough contest between these rivals and their conflicting interests, that while it was predicted that the newly independent states might benefit from such a situation to achieve their goals, in practice, not only were they unable to take advantage of it but they also sustained some damage. In order to prevent the intrusion of outsiders, in the 1990s, Russia took several domestic and local measures in the regional states to demonstrate that the region was unsafe for investment in energy pipelines. Examples of such a policy were clear in Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Russia was trying to induce the western states and other governments to see the regional states through Moscow's eyes.²⁰¹

Russian Proposals concerning the Nagorno Karabakh conflict

In 1991, Russian representatives in the Minsk Group propounded a concept known as the “Common State” to the conflicting parties. The proposal was accepted by the Armenian authorities, but Azerbaijan rejected it, pointing to the “Lisbon Principles” based on guaranteeing Azerbaijani territorial integrity.²⁰²

The Islamic Republic of Iran

The record of Iranian sovereignty over the Caucasus is as long as the entire history of this region. To be more exact, Iran’s supremacy dates back to the time of the Medes, when the Persians extended it over the Caucasus and even beyond. Herodotus mentions that Iranian domination covered the Caucasus mountain ranges too.²⁰³

The Iranians defended these regions against numerous attacks and armed expeditions, especially during the Parthian and Sassanian eras, when the southern Caucasus was a battlefield. They also protected these areas against Roman attacks. Even when the Romans took control of parts of these regions, the Iranians liberated them again. In addition to their historical defence of their own territory, the Iranians defied non-Iranian peoples who overran the Caucasus from the north.

Following the arrival of Islam and the collapse of the Sassanid Empire, Iran's absolute hegemony over the region became insecure. From then on, the Muslim Caliphs appointed governors in the regions, paving the way for those areas to be freed from Iran's control. In the same period, in 1511, when Iran's independence and territorial integrity were threatened by neighbouring great powers, Shah Ismaeil Safavi finally, after eight and half centuries, managed to re-establish the national unity and independence of Iran through numerous wars. He unified more than 50 local governments in different states and provinces of Iran, particularly in the northern sectors of present Azerbaijan and created a powerful single government.²⁰⁴ At the beginning of the 16th century, the Kingdom of Armenia was subject to the rule of the Persian Safavid Empire, where together with the region of Yerevan, it formed one of the four administrative districts (*beglerbeg*).²⁰⁵

The next developments in the Caucasus happened during the Chaldoran war against the Ottomans, after which, through the Amasyie Treaty of 1555, the Caucasus and especially Azerbaijan were divided between the Iranians and the Ottomans. During the second war in 1578 the Caucasus escaped from Iran's dominance.²⁰⁶ In the war of 1604 to 1606 Shah Abbas I liberated the entire Caucasus region and re-annexed it to Iran's territory once more. But the powerful presence of Iran in the Caucasus did not endure much longer. Although the appearance of Nader resulted in the entire Caucasus being liberated from the Russian and Ottoman occupation with the region once again under Iran's rule, when Nader died the Caucasus and the Transcaucasus slipped from Iran's control, except for a short period during

the era of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar. In 1805 the Khanate was annexed by Russia, and the Russo-Persian Treaty of Gulistan (1813) handed it over to the Russian Empire. The Khanate of Yerevan and Nakhichevan did not come under Russian rule until the Peace of Turkmenchai in 1828.²⁰⁷ The Turkmenchai treaty and subsequent protocols demarcated a border between the two empires along the Arax River – a line that cut through the lands inhabited by the Azeri people. Iran was naturally dissatisfied with this situation and found an opportunity to review it at the Paris peace conference of 1919. At the time the central power in Russia was weak, and Moscow was consumed by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. In effect, it had lost control over the south Caucasus and recognized the independence of the three states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.²⁰⁸

As a result of the new conditions in the Caucasus, the Iranian claims at the Paris Conference were left unanswered and the three short-lived “democratic” republics of the South Caucasus lived on for three difficult years, only to be incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1920-21 after the Bolsheviks had secured power in Moscow and were able to reassert control over its peripheries.²⁰⁹ After these events, Iran, which seemed to have accepted the loss of the South Caucasus, formalized the border with the Soviet Union through a treaty in 1921.²¹⁰

After about 150 years, following the Soviet dominance over the Caucasus, the ties between Iran and this land were cut. During that time, the Iranian authorities had no opportunity to adopt an efficient policy towards events in

the Caucasus because of the expansionist policies of the Russian and British Empires and the necessity to fight against the probable consequences of that opposition.

Following the demise of the USSR in 1991 and the independence of the Caucasian Republics, Iran's role in the development of the region provided a valuable and needed opportunity. For Iran, which suffered great losses from Russia's violation of its territorial integrity, no circumstance could bring greater rejoicing than the collapse of the USSR and the independence of the Caucasian States and Central Asia. Since the Transcaucasus had been under Iran's rule for a long time during the 18th and 19 century, Iran has played the role of supreme power in the region after the collapse of the USSR and the elimination of Russian influence in the region, Tehran's attention was drawn once again to the historical dependency of the area.²¹¹

Although Iran was the first state to open its embassy in the Republic of Azerbaijan, it was not among the first to recognize its independence. Iran was in no hurry to acknowledge the republics because of security considerations. If Iranian policy seems illogical at first glance, the reason can be found in its domestic concerns. Because of the downswing in the economic indicators²¹² and the constant fear of irredentism in its multi-ethnic society, the Iranian government was less than pleased by the emergence of an Azerbaijani state to its immediate north.²¹³

As for Iranian relations with the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, since they are both located on the neighbouring north-western border of Iran and have experienced thousands of years of common history with it, the two republics enjoy a special place in Iran's eyes. Since the Republic of Armenia lies within the realm of Iranian civilization and the Republic of Azerbaijan in that of the Iranian Islamic culture, Iranian policy has been based on developing and deepening mutual cooperation and establishing close and friendly ties with both states. Regarding the conflict between the two countries, Iran has followed its national interests through a policy of redressing the balance in its relations with both entities. This policy guarantees an unbiased relationship with Azerbaijan and Armenia, so Iran has not been absolutely Armenian-oriented or Azeri-oriented at any period of time.²¹⁴

Iranian Goals and Interest in the Caucasus

With the collapse of the USSR and the establishment of the newly independent governments in Central Asia and the Caucasus, basic changes happened in the geopolitical structure of the region. These changes have had a great influence especially on the security calculations of the neighbouring states, on their regional relations and on the goals of the interested states. It is natural that Iran, which has the longest border with the former USSR and deep cultural, historical and racial ties with most of the newly independent states, should be particularly influenced by events, so that in recent years, an important part of Iranian foreign policy has been devoted to the issue of "how

to protect the country against potentially destructive developments from the northern neighbours”. At the same time, Iran is making efforts to find a role appropriate to its size and strategic position, as well as to its prospects and potential.²¹⁵

Regarding the importance of the Caucasus for Iran, this region lies within the scope of Iranian national interests for two reasons: first, these republics are located in the vicinity of Iran and this issue demands a great deal of sensitivity and consideration. A few of these factors are:

- The appearance of any instability in the region impacts directly on Iranian national security.
- The most common regional difficulties, i.e. ecological problems, especially those connected with the Caspian Sea, are necessarily related to the whole region. Thus they require the joint support and cooperation of all the regional states.
- Risks apart, the neighbouring states can profit from each other's economic advantages. The Caucasian regional states can benefit from Iran when establishing relations with other countries of the world, and Iran in turn can develop its exports through their local markets.

The second reason to confirm that the Caucasus is within the ambit of Iranian national interests is that the historical, racial, cultural and religious ties between Iran and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus draw them towards it and, in turn, Iran towards the countries that share a feeling of kinship and proximity.²¹⁶

As Herzig notes, the Karabakh war has been the most direct threat to Iran's national security emanating from the north since the 1940s. For Iran, the NK conflict has had a special importance for a number of reasons. First, as noted above the fighting threatened to spill over into Iran at times, notably in the autumn of 1993. Furthermore, the two states involved in the dispute are Iran's neighbours and hence the hostilities directly affect Iran's security. Most of all, the fighting has played a role in the larger regional constellation in which Iran has a prominent place. This led Iran at an early stage – virtually as soon as the two belligerents became independent – to offer its good offices to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. Iranian mediation was hampered first by the repeated Armenian military conquests. To a certain degree, then, Iran has acted to resolve the disagreement in a positive manner.²¹⁷

Iran's Security Goals in the Region

Iran's security goals are relevant to the factors threatening its safety, the most important of which are ethnocentrism, irredentism and conflicts arising there from. Because there are several cultures in the region, this issue is of great importance. The risks resulting from ethno-social problems are other security-threatening elements.

Basically it is crucial for Iran to establish stability and security in the region. One reason is the close cultural-racial structure that exists in most territories on Iran's long border with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. Iran cannot ignore

the risk of contagion from unrest inside its own country. To Iran, instability along the northern borders is the greatest menace. Because of Armenia's escalation of attacks on Azerbaijan, and the bringing of the war to Iran's border, Rafsanjani, the former Iranian President, announced in 1994 in a strongly worded communiqué:

*"The Karabakh conflict is very important for us because it severely affects Iran's security. We have talked to Armenia seriously and frankly notified them that we will not tolerate their aggression any more."*²¹⁸

At the same time, the Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying:

*"Iran cannot be indifferent to such aggression. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as announced several times, condemns any kind of aggression by Armenian forces to the Republic of Azerbaijan and expresses its concern about the continuation of attacks that can ignite passions and plunge the whole region into war."*²¹⁹

Based on official sources, maintaining the status quo and preventing any change in the geopolitical borders in the region of the Caucasus is very important.

As for the security goals, keeping things as they are is conditional on the following:

- Preserving the independence and territorial integrity of the regional states
- Establishing peace and political stability there.
- Strengthening the convergent factors and weakening the divergent ones in the region.
- Preventing the development of chauvinism, ethno-centrism, ultra-nationalism and micro-governments from developing.
- Making efforts to prevent absolute domination of any regional rivals or outsiders.²²⁰

Iran's Economic Goals in the Region

Taking into account the special geopolitical conditions, the fact that the regional states are land-locked, and the unique situation of Iran, which has both potential and *de facto* advantages in the region such as extensive port facilities in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, there are excellent possibilities for Iran to exchange commodities with the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Providing lines of communication and developing transportation networks are the most important axes for Iran's economic cooperation with the region because, in comparison with other regional states, Iran enjoys the nearest, cheapest and safest transit routes for goods and passengers.

We can categorize Iran's most important functions and economic goals as follows:

- Exploring markets and developing bilateral business
- Taking advantage of new opportunities for economic growth
- Taking advantage of strategic privileges

- Investing in different economic sectors, especially in energy production and pipelines
- Contributing to the global economy through regional economic cooperation.

Iran's Cultural Goals in the Region

It is clear that the dominant culture of the regional states (the customs, arts, painting, architecture, literature and history) has much in common with Iran's. Considering that these strong ties have gradually slackened since the rule of the Tsars, Iran's aims regarding communication and cultural cooperation with these states are, in the first instance, to aid in renewing the weakened cultural bases and structures and in preparing the ground for connecting them to their origins, that is, Iranian culture and civilization.²²¹

Iran's Political Goals in the Region

Iran's main policy in the Caucasus is security and economic considerations. One of the most important political aims of Iran is to be free from isolation. Tehran's authorities believe in "regional cooperation" as a solution. This matter is very important, especially because Iran currently faces problems from the east, west and south. Thus the north is not only a vital route for Tehran, but it also helps obviate Iran's insularity.

Regarding the regional cooperation plan as a way to make Iran more accessible, Tehran's plan is achievable through two important processes: first, intra-regional collaboration, and second partnership within the framework of a more comprehensive union i.e. the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Iran's foreign policy has paid special attention to cultural and economic relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. For example, Iran shares a 660 km border with Azerbaijan.

Iran's Position regarding the Conflicting Parties

Because of interference with national interests and security and the convergence of economic and security goals, the position of Iran regarding Azerbaijan and Armenia is complicated.

It is plain that Iran's achieving of its economic aims and interests demands enduring peace and stability beyond its northern borders. However, removing problems and attaining immunity from likely threats requires a certain amount of confrontation to deal with the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The existence of subversive ideas such as "Greater Armenia" and "United Azerbaijan" can put Iran's national security and territorial integrity at risk. Thus the settlement of the NK conflict gives both states the opportunity to quietly enforce their own territorial plans and claims on other states.

However, it may be argued that the Iranian authorities are not particularly worried about the idea of a “Greater Armenia” or a “United Azerbaijan” because firstly, Iran is a powerful state in the region and would use its military power to neutralize any clear security threats. Secondly, it can be argued that it was Armenia and Azerbaijan that separated from Iran under pressure. For this reason, if it was decided, for instance, to constitute a Unified Azerbaijan, it is the Republic of Azerbaijan that would have to join Iran’s Azerbaijan and not vice versa. Iranian officials are worried about the increase of US influence in Azerbaijan and have adopted policies to bring it into its political sphere of influence. This is to counter any influence on Iranian Azeris. It should also be remembered that there is a demand for cultural autonomy by the Azeris in Iran. The Shiism is the religion of the majority in Azerbaijan which is an element of Persian heritage. They accepted Shiism under Safavid and the Safavid united the people of Iran under this faith.

In short, neutralizing the security threats and, at the same time, achieving their economic interests, requires the adoption of clever diplomacy by the Iranian authorities. While the warring factions, especially the Azerbaijani authorities, appear to think that their decision to maintain friendly ties with other states is the stance they should take regarding the conflict, the Iranian authorities know only too well that holding strong opinions for or against any opponent not only does not help to settle the dispute but complicates it further and even prepares the ground for an intensification of regional and supra-regional confrontation.

Iran's national security and interests in the region are overshadowed by the NK conflict. Its position regarding the dispute not only directly affects its mutual relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia, but also has an impact either on the continuation of the fighting or on the settlement process. Because of Iran's prominent role as mediator, the US officially invited it to the Key West talks in 2001 to take care of the mediation process and negotiations and gradually to play a role in the settlement of the NK controversy.²²²

With regard to the re-implementation of the Iranian role, Iranian officials believed, following the Presidents talks with Iran, and generally because of Iran's participation in the peace process, that the US intends to marginalize and weaken Russia in the settlement process of the NK fight, especially in the Caucasus.²²³

The Armenian authorities immediately made a positive response to Iran's mediation, but in his reply to a reporter's question, Heydar Aliiev announced guardedly that he did not believe Iran's mediation would lead to any substantial results at the present time.²²⁴

What we understand from the decisions taken by Tehran's authorities regarding NK is that Iran is interested in a balance of power between the warring parties with the aim of neutralizing the threats to its borders and providing for its minimum economic interests. Since the independence of the Caucasian Republics, Iran has therefore adopted and implemented a middle-

of-the-road policy in its relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia. Professor Halliday, argues:

“In the republics of the former Soviet Union, Iran has not pursued particular advantage in the former Muslim republics of the USSR. It has implemented what has been termed *siasat-i-dast-i-gol*, the policy of the bouquet of flowers, i.e. greeting whoever turns up at Tehran airport from those countries irrespective of ideology. In Tajikistan, Iran has, in conjunction with other Central Asian States, sought to mediate. In the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute Iran has, contrary to any supposition of Islamic solidarity, formed an alliance with Armenia against Shi’ite but pro-Turkish and pro-American Azerbaijan.”²²⁵

Because of the ruling Islamic government in Iran, it is surprising to witness the same behaviour shown towards co-religionist Azerbaijan and Christian Armenia. Accordingly, outside observers suppose that Iran’s middle-of-the-road policy in the region is nonetheless to the benefit of the Armenians despite religious and cultural similarities.

Iran’s Position regarding the Republic of Armenia

Historically the relationship between Iran and Armenia is amongst the oldest in the world. Records of such relations date back over 3,000 years. It is not possible to study and understand Armenia’s history without also knowing the history of Iran.

Taking into account Armenia's geopolitical location, surrounded by other nations, the Armenians consider Iran as the most important factor in protecting them against the Turkish World, so they greatly value their relationship and their 40-kilometre border with Iran.

After World War One and Armenia's independence on 28th May 1918, Iranian-Armenian relations entered a new phase because, on that occasion, the Armenians were threatened by Turkey from the west, and they were at war with Azerbaijan in the provinces of Zangezur and NK. They also had some differences on the northern border with Georgia in the vicinity of Luri. The Bolsheviks had initiated efforts inside the country to subvert the reign of the republic so at that time, Armenia's only safe border was the southern one with Iran. Armenia therefore greatly esteemed this vital border and its relations with Iran.²²⁶

Iran was one of the first states to recognize the independence of the Republic of Armenia on 26 December 1991, and bilateral relations were promptly developed on different points. At the same time, Iran commenced its work as mediator in the NK dispute. Worried about the continuation and escalation of the clash, Iran spared no effort to stop the war. The result was the ceasefire agreement signed by Ter-Petrossian, the Armenian President, and Mamadev, the Azerbaijani acting President, with the mediation of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the then Iranian President.²²⁷

Because other regional and supra-regional powers, particularly Russia were not happy with the rise of Iran's influence in the region, each one started to obstruct peace in some way. This blockage by the regional and supra-regional and global powers and the loss of the opportunity secured by the international community and the UN during the ceasefire led to the breakdown of Iran's mediation.²²⁸

The political and security aspects of Iran-Armenia relations generally outweigh their economic and commercial ones. Iran is endeavouring to maintain a power balance in the region through its regional policy; hence Armenia sees Iran's policy on the NK conflict as being positive. It also considers Iran's mediation as effective.

Although Iran is always proclaiming its neutrality regarding the NK dispute, some of its actions are indicative of a significant bias towards Armenia. Such a tendency is because of its security interests and Turkish and Azeri extremist attitudes threaten Iran's territorial integrity and also make Azerbaijan more disposed to develop relations with Turkey, Israel and some western states.

This is why Iran considers Armenia as an "equipoise" on its northern borders and a deterrent factor against nationalism and separatist provocations. Armenia also considers Iran as a guarantee of survival against Turkish threats. For these reasons, Iranian-Armenian relations are very important and strategic to both states. Therefore this collaboration plays a decisive role and

affects the peace and stability of the region. On the whole the two states have lots of common interests and there are bright prospects for the development of political and economic cooperation.

The Republic of Armenia is of great importance because:

- It is counted as part of Iran's strategic strength
- It is an assured buffer zone between Azerbaijan and Turkey
- It enjoys effective lobbying power in the world
- It has good relations with Russia
- It maintains a historical enmity towards Turkey – Iran's long time rival in the region
- It is Iran's only Christian neighbour. This is important because according to Iranian officials, as an Islamic republic, having good relations with Armenia can improve the international image of the country.

Iran's Position regarding the Republic of Azerbaijan

Despite the fact that Iran was the first state to open its embassy in the Republic of Azerbaijan, it was not among the first to recognize its independence. Because of security considerations, Iran was in no hurry to acknowledge the new republics in Central Asia and the Caucasian states except Armenia. At that time, Aliakbar Velayati, the Iranian Foreign Minister, announced that Iran looked at the Central Asia and the Caucasian states through Moscow, as in times past. Some experts in international relations

argue that the unequal relations between Iran and Azerbaijan during the time of the Popular Front were related to Iran's preliminary attitude towards Azerbaijani independence.²²⁹ Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan are not only influenced by the NK conflict, but also strongly affected by domestic political developments in Azerbaijan.

However, Azerbaijani local and racial characteristics and strengths such as their culture, language, Iranian history and civilization, religious beliefs, Islamic customs, Russian culture and civilization, political geography and history require Azerbaijan to refrain from either denying them unilaterally or showing a bias towards one or two of these characteristics. On the contrary Azerbaijan should adopt a policy based on a positive balance between these elements.²³⁰ The observations of the Popular Front and its leader, Abulfazl Elchibey, and its divergence from the policy of Heydar Aliiev, the Azerbaijani former president, are a clear illustration of the above ideas.

When Elchibey was toppled in June 1993 and replaced by Aliiev, the time seemed ripe for a rapprochement between Azerbaijan and Iran. However, Aliiev's sense of political tact and his awareness of Iran's importance for Azerbaijan's security led him to follow a conciliatory path.²³¹ He quickly moved to restore some kind of balance in Azerbaijan's foreign relations, seeking to distance himself from the tight alliance with Turkey that Elchibey had built, in order to diversify his international contacts.²³²

During that period, many observers and analysts of international relations interpreted the fall of the Popular Front and the replacement of Aliev as a victory for Iran and Russia against Turkey and its advocates in the Caucasus. The position taken by Russia and Iran regarding Azerbaijan's development also confirmed this idea.²³³

Although Iran made strenuous efforts to establish a ceasefire between Armenian and Azeri forces before Aliev's replacement, Iran's position regarding Armenia never went as far as a condemnation. By the time Aliev swept to power, Iran condemned Armenia's assault on Azerbaijani territory, and called on the international communities and the OECD to fend off attacks from Azerbaijan. Although this change in Iran's conduct was influenced by the escalation of Armenian attacks and the bringing of the war to within close proximity of Iran's northern borders, it was also affected by the change of rule in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

After Aliev came to power, a new phase started in the relationship between the two states. Although the tension eased, Azerbaijan abstained from approaching Iran, as it had done before, especially after 1995 when Iran was abruptly removed from the "Century Compact" and membership of the Oil Consortium. Subsequently various differences grew regarding the legal arrangement of the Caspian Sea and other issues. Thus the development of relations between the two states has not enjoyed ideal conditions.²³⁴

As mentioned, the Iranian position regarding this crisis has always been cautious. When Armenia retired from the conflict, Iran's declared policy was to criticize its aggression in caustic terms, but it did not adopt any drastic measures and restricted itself to comments and regrets. Meanwhile Iranian nationalists pressured the regime to side with Azerbaijan, reasoning that the Azeris of Azerbaijan were in fact Iranian citizens, as the whole of Azerbaijan belonged to Iran.²³⁵ Some extremist newspapers also called for the outright condemnation of the Armenian side by the Iranian government.²³⁶

However, Iranian-Armenian relations in economic, security, cultural and strategic aspects, along with Iran's viewpoint on the NK conflict, caused the Azerbaijani authorities to become dissatisfied. With 20 per cent of their territory occupied, the Azeris considered that the Iranian fence-straddling policy in the Karabakh crisis and the adopting of a conciliatory approach to the occupation implied tacit support for the Armenians.²³⁷

In short, the NK dispute was a double-edged sword, which if it continued to escalate and was not resolved would put Iranian national security at risk. If the conflict continued, it would probably spill over into Iran because it was close to the Iranian border and because both factions shared a common race and religion with Iran. Thus tension and hostility would appear between the Azeris and Armenians living in Iran and threaten Iranian national security.

Furthermore, if the dispute intensified, it would be more probable that insurgents would interfere from outside and then the conflict would turn into a

regional or supra-regional war. If it was settled by exchanging territory, changing borders, or setting up a buffer zone with the deployment of peacekeepers, it was clear that in such a case Iranian national security and territorial integrity would be directly at risk, particularly through the changing of borders – something to which Iran would never agree. As the Secretary of the Iranian National Security Council declared bluntly in 1994: “We have always declared that under no circumstances would we agree to any change in our borders. We believe this would disrupt the stability and security of the region and it would be the start of a dangerous war in the region.”²³⁸

Perhaps it was for this reason that Iran was concerned about managing the crisis and establishing a balance between the adversaries rather than a settlement, because the preserving of Iran’s national security and interests required that there should be no winner or loser in the NK conflict.

From the actions and remarks of the Iranian authorities concerning the dispute, it seems that their strategy has been based on the following:

- Keeping the present political geography of the Caucasus, especially in the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Supporting a peaceful solution to the NK war
- Maintaining neutrality in the conflict
- Being ready for mediation and playing a role in respect of a fair settlement of the quarrel
- Avoiding turning the clash into a religious issue
- Keeping a balance in relations with the Armenians and Azeris

- Seriously supporting all those processes that help in settling the disagreement and establishing peace and stability in the region.

Iranian Strategy and the Interests of other Regional & Non-regional Powers

One of the main factors in the perpetuation of the NK dispute is hostility towards the interests of regional and supra-regional outsiders in the Caucasus. The policy of each outsider in the achieving of its goals and interests in the area is to oppose the policies of the others. The consequence of such opposition is the formation of informal coalitions, which will finally lead to the establishing of a balance of power between the two parties. The settlement of the crisis by one overcoming the other is highly problematical. The result of such a balance is nothing but the perpetuation of the discord.

The conflict of outsiders' interests in the Caucasus and the balance resulting from that is to some degree ambiguous and an exact demarcation line between the two sides is impossible. In such conditions, the established balances are usually fluid and the coalitions vary depending on the interests generating them. Iran's aspiration to establish a balance in the region is in accordance with Russian interests and as a result, a coordination and harmony is observable in the positions of both states. On the other hand, it is against Russia's interests in some cases. The positions of both states are therefore incompatible and even neutralize each other. For instance, Iran and

Russia are not particularly interested in Western influence in the region. They consider the Pan-Turkic role of Turkey to be an aggravation of the instability in the region and a threat to their territorial integrity. In the meantime, Iran does not want to see a resurgence of Russian military dominance in the region. Conversely Russia is pessimistic about the spread of Iran's cultural influence.

They also have differences regarding the routes of the oil pipelines in the region. Russia considers that the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) restricts its influence in the area, but Iran views it as a tool by which to develop its influence there.²³⁹ ECO is a Tehran based organization and was founded by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan in 1985 for the purpose of promoting economic and cultural cooperation. Other members of the organisation include: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Iranian regional policy also faces different reactions from Turkey. Many examples can be found in regional developments that confirm the rivalry of Iran and Turkey for influence in the region. This is why the US prefers Turkey to play a dominant role. In particular, it believes that Turkey's policy in the region can forestall Pan-Islamism and a pro-Iranian bias.

Tehran is not generally interested in the unilateral development of Turkish cultural-political influence in the region, and neither is Russian military dominance intended to guard the borders of the Commonwealth Republics.

Besides, Iran does not conceal its dissatisfaction with the influential development of the West over the region, especially the US. It is clear that such positions hinder the other outsiders' interests and the final result is the unsettling of the conflict.

In the end, as long as the interests of the outsiders in the NK question continue to be at variance, they will tend not to integrate and cooperate with a negative impact on settling the conflict.

The Republic of Turkey

The fall of the Soviet Union was warmly welcomed by certain circles in Turkey, which quickly rediscovered that Turkey had "lost cousins" in the Caucasus and Central Asia.²⁴⁰ The independence of five republics inhabited by people of Turkic origin (one in the Caucasus and four in Central Asia), presented Turkey with good opportunities to become a leading regional power.²⁴¹ The unexpected emergence of these states, especially in a geographical area which had been greatly affected by Turkey's history, bolstered Turkish nationalism and once again there were rumours about forming a Turan United Territory. Thus Turkey, which played a passive role in Central Asia and the Caucasus before the demise of the Soviet Union and harmonized its position with the western states, changed its position and as the main outsider was granted a decisive and key role in regional affairs when

the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended. Under these new conditions the Ankara authorities, with an eye on their own political geography which was indicative of the rise of their strategic importance in the Middle East, the Near East and Central Asia - the Caucasus and the Balkans - considered that pursuing such a pivoting role was within their competence.

Since the turbulent years of World War One, Turkey has never severed its contacts with the nationalist Turkish-language communities in the Caucasus. Now, by reinforcing relations with the supporters of the Popular Front, Turkey began to exercise influence and played a leading role from the moment that they laid down their arms during the time of Ataturk in March 1923. Thus Turkey, as the first state to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted the Popular Front policy of explicit support. The Ankara authorities played a more active part than others in the region in order to regain their standing. Accordingly the West introduced and supported Turkey as the model of a secular government. After the Ottoman forces lost during World War One, the young Turks under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal - Ataturk - created the modern state of Turkey. One of their goals was to unify all the Turkish-speaking territories and bring them under a single power, namely "Turan". This view has always been taken into consideration by the Turkish authorities in their position taking and policymaking.²⁴²

Since 1989 Ankara has founded its foreign policy on the basis of developing ties with regional states and sought to implement a decisive and sensitive role in all the affairs of the region.

In this context the first problem to arise in the region that attracted Turkey was the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia over NK. Such a consideration was quite natural because this conflict could undo Turkey's efforts to influence Central Asia and the Caucasus. The development of Turkey's influence in the region would only be possible if Azerbaijan were not defeated, otherwise Turkey would lose the land passage leading to the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. It would not then be able to achieve its ultimate goal, the formation of a Turkish-speaking community. For obvious geopolitical reasons, Azerbaijan provides the principal link between Turkey and Central Asia.²⁴³ In fact, in arranging its long-term strategy Turkey founded its foreign policy on the basis of an all-out and overt support of Azerbaijan. To confirm this, some important Turkish strategies regarding Azerbaijan merit examination:

- Support for Azerbaijani independence
- Support for Baku's sovereignty over NK
- A desire to prevent or limit a Russian return to that country
- Participation in Azerbaijani oil production and export of significant amounts to Turkey
- Preserving friendly and strong ties with Baku.²⁴⁴

Turkey's Goals and Interests in Central Asia & the Caucasus

Turkey has a number of goals in Central Asia and the Caucasus and it organizes its activities in the region to achieve those objectives.

We can arrange the interests of this state in Central Asia and the Caucasus under three headings: political, economic and cultural. The most important political aims of Turkey in the region are as follows:

- Serving as a example of a secular government as the only desirable system to replace the Communist regime in the region
- Presenting Turkey as the only safe communication link between the West and Central Asia and the Caucasus
- Fighting against Islamic fundamentalism and revolutionary ideas and preventing them from developing in the region
- Confronting Armenian territorial claims
- Preventing the defeat of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the war with Armenia
- Publicizing Pan-Turkish notions for some 200 million Turks (from Central Asia to the farthest Balkan peninsula.²⁴⁵)

As for Turkish economic interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus, factors such as its geographical size, natural resources and economic potential in the area have a special place in the economic policies of that country. The focus on Caspian Sea energy and pipelines is one of the main ways in which

Ankara seeks to fulfil its long-term interests and advance its regional status. Historical records of Turkey's presence in the region and its relations with the Turkish-speaking residents have presented this state with an ideal opportunity to penetrate this area more effectively. Since the economic stagnation of the republics of the CIS and their political instability are regarded as the main problems, and because Turkey's economic cooperation with these republics is to strengthen the bases of their independence, the Soviet Union has failed to offer Turkey an opportunity to strengthen its role in the region, even though its economic cooperation could have a positive effect on the political stability of the republics.²⁴⁶

However, this situation provides Turkey with a great opening, not only because it is a state developing according to European criteria but also, according to Baku and Tbilisi, it is looked upon as a modern and progressive regional power.

Considering that the Caucasian and Central Asian countries are economically in a state of transition and that they are planning for a free market economy, they are obviously in need of financial resources as well as the technical and technological aids of the West. Some international economic experts believe that one of the main routes for the spread of Turkish influence in the region is to offer the republics financial and technical help.²⁴⁷

When considering Turkish goals and cultural interests, the most important aim pursued by the Turks in Central Asia and the Caucasus is that of

developing a Pan-Turkish ideology. The Ankara authorities are well aware that in order to stabilize and deepen their influence in the region, they must first of all balance and strengthen their cultural presence. Thus they are especially concerned with strengthening the position of the historical and cultural communities of the region. Taking into account the achievement of its cultural objectives there, one of the Turkish strategic goals is to introduce and propagate Pan-Turkish ideas to fill the existing vacuum resulting from the decline of Marxist ideology. By achieving this aim, the mainstay of its cultural influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus will be assured.²⁴⁸

Turkey's Efforts to Influence the Region

In the present circumstances, several factors encourage Turkey to forge links with the states of the region. This country enjoys appropriate ways and means to ensure a presence in the area. The existing historical and cultural communities, with their racial, religious and linguistic unity, are the most important agencies on which the country depends to guarantee a share in regional developments.

Another stimulus for other countries like Turkey to fill the power vacuum results from the liberation of the neighbouring areas from Russian control. Since the Turks believe that if another outsider gets in first, this could be problematic, it is only natural for them to seize the opportunity for influence.

The cooperation of Turkish-populated states in Central Asia and the Caucasus also frees Turkey from isolation. Turkey, which felt internationally isolated, was only too pleased to discover some “cousins” looking to her with expectant eyes.²⁴⁹ The in the formation of a newly independent state, there is a golden opportunity for Turkey to free itself from this “chronic isolation”. Moreover, by developing cooperation with these states, not only will it escape this segregation, but it will also act as a bridge between them. The western states will be forced to show special attention towards such an important entity through which they communicate with the newly independent republics. Therefore their strategic position is an important tool in the hands of the Turks. It may be that one of the reasons that Turkey’s membership of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was approved (signed in December 1991) was its special importance following the fall of the Soviet Union.

Although these unifying factors present Turkey with opportunities to establish ties with the regional states and it has the power of manoeuvring in the area by virtue of its organization and facilities, it faces a number of problems and restrictions that attenuate its dominance in relation to powerful rivals like Russia and Iran. Russian policies, particularly with reference to the region, are regarded as the main limiting factor for Turkey to influence the area.²⁵⁰ Russia is the main player in the region as in the past, and no policy can be successful without considering Russian interests. Russia cannot allow these mainly Turkish-speaking republics to approach Ankara with the aim of

establishing a “Greater Turkistan” in the domain of the former Empire of the Soviet Union.²⁵¹

Moreover, the Russians intend to confine Turkey to its own borders. For that reason Moscow is sensitive to Turkey’s interference in the NK conflict. Furthermore, on every occasion that Turkey has signalled its intention to involve itself in Karabakh, Moscow has responded promptly, without trying to conceal its discontent with Ankara’s policies.²⁵²

On the other hand, after World War Two, the Ankara authorities dispensed with the East because of threats from the Soviet Union and they adopted a policy of approaching and establishing ties with the West and Europe. Since then, they have made every effort to forge such links. It has been years since Turkey tried to join the European Union and the sudden change of course and greater attention to the East will probably prevent Turkey from achieving this enduring wish.

Another limitation on Turkey’s influence in the region is its economic position. Economically this state cannot match its rivals because it can suffer from a financial crisis with debts of over 100 billion dollars, so it is not able to meet the increasing needs of the republics. In fact Turkey’s economic plight has contributed to the unsatisfactory fulfilment of Ankara’s promises for investments to the republics.

The newly independent countries suffer from political instability. These countries do not follow an unchangeable foreign policy, with a firm belief with regard to their future. Just a few months after confirming the “Turkish Model”, Islam Karimev talked about the “Chinese Model”, and Kazakhstan turned its back on previous policies by praising the “Korean Model.”²⁵³

Furthermore, the economic, social and political situation in the republics is another important factor that impedes the presence of Turkey in the region. In particular, most ruling elites and politicians there are former communists and it is probable that they disagree with Turkey’s “free market” solution.²⁵⁴

Another important factor that limits Turkish influence is Western pressure. However, the US and Europe do not want Iran, as Turkey’s rival, to exercise authority in the region. Nevertheless the West’s support of Turkey is conditional on the republics’ acceptance of the Turkish Model alone in the framework of a secular democracy and market system, and also on Turkey not resorting to religious movements. It follows that if the US and especially Europe are in time forced to choose between Turkey and Russia.²⁵⁵

We can therefore consider NATO and the western countries among Turkey’s constraints. Turkey’s NATO membership does not permit it to pursue an “adventurist” policy in its “near abroad” (to use the Russian term). In a wider context, Turkey’s relations with and its will to integrate into Western Europe give the Western powers a certain amount of pull over it.²⁵⁶

Another limiting factor is the lack of territorial or geographical connection with the republics. The only Turkish link is currently a 12-kilometre common border with Nakhichevan, which is under constant siege by Armenia. Thus it is not counted as part of the region and is forced to go through Iran or Armenia to gain access to the other republics. Competitive relations with Iran and hostile relations with Armenia prevent Turkey from relying on these routes.²⁵⁷

Turkey's Position regarding Both Parties in the NK Conflict

The Turks' new position regarding the newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union is based more on realistic foreign policy considerations than ideological interests. Hence it is expected that Turkey's regional and global role will increase politically because of the cultural relations that it has with a large number of groups in the republics, as well as its support for Israel and the US

Turkey is therefore regarded as the main regional player in the affairs of Central Asia and the Caucasus and especially in the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh. Because Turkey considers itself an interested and responsible state playing a role in how the conflict is settled or perpetuated, Ankara's viewpoint has a decisive effect on the resolution of the Karabakh fighting. For this reason, it is very important to consider the Turkish position regarding the two adversaries.

Turkey's Position Concerning the Republic of Azerbaijan

Since the birth of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Turkey has been trying to establish a special relationship with it. The relations between the two countries, particularly when the Popular Front, which had strong pan-Azerbaijani and pan-Turkish views, came to power, were greatly enhanced, and Azerbaijani foreign policy was basically harmonized with Turkish diplomacy. Elchibey's attraction to the Turkish model for Azerbaijan, his militant secularism and his anti-Iranian views undoubtedly corresponded to what many Turks thought privately.²⁵⁸ But in 1993, after changes in the ruling administration of Azerbaijan, its relations with Turkey, which strongly supported Elchibey, became frosty. After a short while the strained relations were relaxed by Aliiev, through the adoption of special ties of friendship. It is clear that Aliiev (unlike Elchibey, who gave priority to Turkey) played the Turkish card whenever it suited his purposes, but was nevertheless unable to turn his back on Ankara when such was required.²⁵⁹

However, the Ankara government had no intention of losing a great Turkish-speaking country like Azerbaijan, so Turkey remained its chief ally.

As mentioned, factors such as a positive historical antecedent, cultural, religious and language affinity and the unique and vital location of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Turkey to continue its influence over the republics, are all significant in increasing the cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus Turkey does not envisage any obstacle to its unlimited influence in Azerbaijan. It was the first state to recognize Azerbaijani independence by

opening an embassy there. Its granting of scholarships to thousands of university, college and theological students, constructing bridges over the main rivers in Nakhichevan and Turkey, making investments in the exploration and extraction of oil, granting loans and credits, starting live broadcasting of Turkish television programmes, publishing the Turkish newspaper "Time" in Baku, arranging a constant interchange of teams from high-ranking to common people, openly supporting Azerbaijan in its conflict with Armenia, pressurizing the Armenians, sending light armament and dispatching military advisors to Baku - all were indicative of the enhanced relations between the two states.²⁶⁰

Based on the treaty of March 1923 between Ataturk and Lenin, Turkish leaders believe that Turkey, like Cyprus, is charged with guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan against Armenian attacks. Turkey never concealed its undisguised support for Azerbaijan during the hostilities. Moreover, during the advance of the Armenian forces in Aghdam, Kalbajar and Tartar, which carried the conflict into Nakhichevan, Turkey officially threatened Armenia with military intervention in the war, put its forces on full alert and called on the international community for explicit and prompt condemnation of Armenian aggression against Azerbaijani territory. This is despite Moscow's strong Republic of Azerbaijan. This obligation has required Ankara to make an all-out effort to defend reaction to this declaration and the failure of the western allies to dissuade the Turks from military action, the adopting of such positions was indicative of the level of support of the Ankara authorities for Baku in the NK clash.²⁶¹ Azerbaijan, however, never officially

asked for Turkish intervention in the conflict. According to Azerbaijan's ambassador in Ankara, Mehmet Novruzoglu Aliev, the main help that Azerbaijan wanted from Turkey was that of using its contacts in the Western alliance to explain the Azerbaijani side of the story to the world.²⁶² Turkey's stance regarding Azerbaijan was natural and understandable. As mentioned, Azerbaijan links Turkey to the republics, but the NK conflict had obstructed this geographical connection. Azerbaijan's defeat in the NK dispute was thus tantamount to Turkey's failure to exert influence in the region. Turkey was defending its own interests before shielding those of Azerbaijan. Certainly Turkish interests would probably be in contradiction to Azerbaijan's. A clear example of this occurred when the peace plan proposed by Goble, based on a territorial swap, was presented in 1992. With the implementation of the Goble plan, Turkey's access to the region would be greatly facilitated, so it agreed with the plan without considering Azerbaijani interests. Based on Goble's proposals, the Karabakh region would be exchanged for the Armenian Zangezur area. But under no circumstances would Azerbaijan agree to losing the strategic territory of Karabakh and it claimed that Zangezur had also been part of its domain, which had been separated from it by Stalin's colonialism.

Turkish efforts to support Azerbaijan were not just for reasons of so-called brotherhood or cultural, religious and language affinity, but because Turkey was in a sense fighting against Armenia's expansionism and territorial claims against Turkey by supporting Azerbaijan in the NK conflict. In the "Greater Armenia" plan, which extremist Armenians hoped to put into effect, not only

were Karabakh and Nakhichevan included but also some regions of Georgia and the eastern part of Turkey (Anatolia) and even some provinces of Iran. Evidently the mere thought of such a possibility could threaten Turkish national security, territorial integrity and political-economical interests in the region.²⁶³

Turkey's Position Regarding the Republic of Armenia

Since the independence of the Republic of Armenia, the establishing of relations with Turkey has involved many obstacles such as Genocide in 1915. The Turkish support of Azerbaijan in the NK war, the verbal threats of Armenia, the spy flights by Turks over Armenian airspace, the cutting of Armenian links with the Mediterranean and the besieging of that country, the abrogation of the March 1993 agreement by Armenia, were compelling reasons for the deepening of differences and the intensifying of hostilities.²⁶⁴ Yerevan has stated that is ready to normalize relation with Turkey without any precondition but Turkey is requesting Armenia to give up the policy of international recognition of Armenian 1915 Genocide.

However, it seems that observable realities have put both countries under pressure to establish good relations. Armenia in particular has repeatedly talked about the need to normalize its ties with Turkey, despite the implicit denial of what they call the genocide of the Armenians by the Ottoman Turks in 1915, whose ceremonies on 24th April every year have lost their intensity during the past decade. Turkey on the other hand, which badly needs the

Armenian links to connect it with Azerbaijan and other Central Asian and Caucasian republics, is aware of Armenia's financial plight and is trying to achieve its political goals through economic means. Turkey has also recently been under pressure from the US to normalize its relations with Armenia. Another gesture on the part of Turkey was to invite Armenia and Azerbaijan to take part in the foundation of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Programme, which was from the onset a Turkish initiative. Furthermore, Turkish business circles are pressurizing the government to open trade relations with Armenia. Turkey has a strong interest in opening the border barriers to Armenia.²⁶⁵

Because the Armenians needed Turkish routes to gain access to the Mediterranean, they focused on present conditions, and instead of looking to the past and stressing controversial issues, they accepted the Turkish offer and were admitted as a member of the community of Black Seas States.

In a joint move, both states agreed to establish provincial commissions and trade relations with the neighbouring provinces. But at the beginning of 2004, after the remarks of Ankara's high-ranking officials about their desire to re-open their borders to Armenia and to establish trade relations between the two states, the Azeris vented their anger with a stark warning announcing that if the borders were re-opened, Turkey should pull out of the peace process. Subsequently Turko-Azeri relations became strained, at least for a while. It is often claimed, especially by Armenian observers, that Baku holds the key to Turkish-Armenian relations, as Heydar Aliiev himself said more than once.²⁶⁶

During the recent visit of the newly elected Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev to Ankara in 1993, the Presidents of both states redressed the balance in their relations. They also issued a declaration on 14th April stressing the unity of the two states concerning the peace process of NK, and reiterated their assertion that the Armenians must withdraw from Azerbaijani-occupied territory. They added that the Karabakh peace solution must be based on respect for territorial integrity and borders.²⁶⁷

Thus we can perceive from Turkish-Armenian dealings that, despite the efforts made by the Armenian and Turkish sides to normalize relations, the re-establishing of the ties between Armenia and Turkey have encountered many obstacles, just as in the past. In Armenia, some parties like the Dashnaks continue to unite people against the Turks and in Turkey there is also much opposition to a normalization of ties with Armenia.

Perhaps one of the most important measures taken to manipulate public opinion and solve the differences between the two states was the forming of the Turkish–Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC), in July 2001, which was established to improve relations between the two countries with support of the US

However, despite the efforts made by both countries to relax the existing tensions, their contacts have been less than friendly. While the NK conflict remains unsolved, the normalization of bonds between Turkey and Armenia is unlikely because in this conflict, Turkey looks on Armenia as an aggressor

and has insisted on the evacuation of the Azerbaijani occupied territories by Armenian forces as a precondition to the re-establishing of diplomatic interchanges. But the Armenians will not accept any condition for establishing diplomatic ties. Moreover, Nikolay Hovhannissyan believes that Armenia has never been an aggressor, but merely tried to guarantee the security of NK. Thus the Turkish demand and precondition is baseless and unacceptable, and Armenia considers it an insult to its national prestige.²⁶⁸

On 21st September 2004 the Turkish Foreign Minister Abdollah Gul, in a meeting with the Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian, announced that opening the Turkish border to Armenia was dependent on the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from Azerbaijani occupied territories and also on Yerevan abandoning its support for Spiurka, which is at present in the European parliament seeking approval for an investigation into the Armenian genocide by the Ottomans at the beginning of the century.²⁶⁹ Does the latest Turkish position therefore indicate the absence of change in Ankara's stance regarding its relations with Armenia? Due to the negative effects of Turkey's siege and the severing of relations with Armenia, the latter has recently (at the beginning of 2005) resorted to the Europeans in a clever move to force Turkey's hand in this matter. Because Turkey wants to join the EU, Armenia has exploited this opportunity and encouraged Europe to put Turkey under pressure to change its policy regarding Armenia. Consequently Oskanian, the Armenian Foreign Minister, declared pointedly that he could not understand why the European leaders ignored Turkey's shortcomings and impudence.²⁷⁰

As for US pressure on Turkey to re-open its borders to Armenia, if Europe agreed with the US it would be much more probable in the future that Turkey would change its policy in its relations with Armenia. In 2008 and 2009 both countries with support of the US and the EU took steps to normalize relations. The presidents met in July 2008 in Astana. After the Russia-Georgia war Ankara lifted restrictions on Armenia to use Turkish air space in August 2008. Turkey's President visited Armenia in September 2008 and during this meeting both sides agreed to improve relations. Also in 2008 the Government of Turkey authorized 40,000 illegal Armenian workers to continue residence. Sarkisian and Gul, the Presidents of Armenia and Turkey, met in Prague in May 2009.

Turkey's Overall Strategy over Azerbaijan, Armenia & NK

Since the independence of the republics, Turkey's strategy over Azerbaijan, Armenia and the NK conflict has been based on the following generalities:

- Supporting the Republic of Azerbaijan and its territorial integrity in the conflict with the Republic of Armenia over NK
- Enhancing the mutual relations with Azerbaijan under common conceptions such as ethnicity, language, religion, culture and history
- Persisting in the establishing of strategic unity with the Republic of Azerbaijan in the political, economic and military fields
- Exploiting the idea of the Republic of Azerbaijan as a bridge to influence the Turkish-speaking states of Central Asia, the autonomous republics,

the Muslim-populated republics of the northern Caucasus and the Turkish regions on the margins of the Volga river

- Emphasizing and persisting in holding meetings, especially for the Turkish-speaking people in general, and organizing programmes in order to fulfil the dream of Pan-Turkism
- Making an effort to fulfil the plans whereby Azerbaijani oil pipelines and generally the energy of the Caspian Sea would pass through Turkish territory
- Defending Azerbaijan against Russian pressure and their excessive demands
- Competing with Iran in a move to influence Azerbaijan and making efforts to weaken Iran's role in that country
- Condemning Armenian aggression towards Azerbaijan in international and regional organizations and communities
- Magnifying the risk of Pan-Armenianism among the regional states, especially Georgia
- Accusing Armenia of supporting the Kurds and the PKK organization
- Making efforts to isolate Armenia politically and economically
- Continuing the siege and economic boycott of Armenia.

During the years following the independence of the republics, the Turks put the above-mentioned subjects on the agenda, some of which were their basic strategies in the region.

Turkey's Strategy in Opposition to the Interests of other Outsiders and its Effect on the Conflict

Turkey's Pan-Turkish policy in opposition to other regional powers, particularly Russia, Iran and China, has had a decisive effect on the perpetuation of the NK conflict between the two republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia. Such oppositional interests and Turkey's rivalry with Russia and Iran are therefore considered as one of the main obstacles in the process of settling the differences between the Azeris and the Armenians. These three long-standing rivals have regarded each others' actions as a ploy to provoke their adversaries. Just as Iran's efforts to establish a ceasefire were countered by Russia, similarly Turkey's measures to settle the conflict were met with suspicion from Iran and Russia. In other words, the rivalry between Russia, Turkey and Iran is in reality the result of the different interests that each government follows in the region. For this reason, the future of the NK crisis depends on the outcome of the efforts made by these three states. Of course this does not mean that each of them acts independently in its regional policies, since during recent years the regional and supra-regional outsiders have approached each other and set up some informal coalitions and groups in their common interest. Russia, Iran and Armenia, which have more or less common policies in the area, stand against the US and Azerbaijan. What is clear for the moment is that Russia, Iran and Armenia share a common interest, which they are pursuing so as to lessen Turkish influence in the region and to prevent the rise of an oil-rich Azerbaijani state.²⁷¹

There may be hope of settling the dispute when the oppositional interests and goals of one group can be imposed on the others, or the interests of the outsiders are somehow harmonized regarding the resolution of the conflict. As long as the interests of regional and supra-regional outsiders are in opposition to each other, the “no war, no peace” situation will persist in the area. In short, without the understanding and cooperation of outsiders, little hope can be envisaged for a conclusion of the disagreement and the establishment of peace in the region.²⁷²

Turkey’s Proposals for the Settlement of the NK Conflict

Turkish proposals to settle the NK hostilities are in complete agreement with its regional stance and viewpoint regarding the Caucasus. Ankara has proposed that the land connecting the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan, which was seized by the Armenians, should be entrusted to Azerbaijan and in return, Azerbaijan would consign a part of NK to the Armenians. Azerbaijan would be linked to Nakhichevan by a direct land route, and Armenia would be directly connected to Karabakh through this corridor. Turkey not only would face no obstacle to entering Central Asia and the Caucasus but also would be directly joined territorially to a vast region stretching from the Chinese border to Azerbaijan. This proposal was not welcomed by either of the warring factions because Armenia would

thereby be deprived of its territorial link and vital border with Iran, and Azerbaijan would also lose NK. This proposal was also presented by the US.²⁷³

The United States of America

The US was among the first states to recognize the independence of the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia but because of the rapidity and seriousness of the developments the US, like other outsiders, was taken by surprise and was doubtful about the future and real degree of independence of these countries. The two months' deferment by the Americans in sending their ambassador to the newly independent republics confirms this point. It is evident that the developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus had no direct impact on America's vital interests, so this matter was an important reason for the delay in entering the locality. Instead of making efforts to gain strategic advantage there, the US prevents other internal actors from accessing their benefits, such as oil and natural gas resources. The Caspian basin is the third largest source of oil and natural gas reserves in the world. This typifies the policy of the US in the region.²⁷⁴

At present there is no threat to US interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus. The only worrying factor was the presence of nuclear weapons in the area, hence one of the most important preferences of the US was to offer political, diplomatic, and economic support to some of the republics in return for their nuclear disarmament.²⁷⁵ The Soviet Union moved nuclear weapons

from Eastern Europe, Baltic republics, Armenia, and Azerbaijan to Russia before the end of 1991. But tactical nuclear weapons remained in Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

In the beginning, the Americans were dependent on the Russians for their views on the region; they were not too worried about events there and did not have the status to exert a significant influence on this area. But in time the US fixed its attention on the area, fearing lest the newly independent republics be influenced by Iran and other regional states and fill the power vacuum caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁷⁶

Goble argues that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US administration almost immediately formulated three modest policy goals for the NIS:

- The US declared its support for the independence of the NIS and aimed to help prevent them from gravitating towards Russia and, in particular, Iran
- The US aimed to support the establishment of liberal democratic regimes in the NIS, and adjusted its policy according to the progress of democratization in those states
- The US supported the export of Caspian energy resources by a route that would not exclusively depend upon Russia and that would, most importantly, not cross Iranian territory.²⁷⁷

The US interest in retaining a presence in the critical area of Karabakh is manifest and its concern about the conflict between the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia has a direct correlation with its own interests.

The US has two separate policies regarding NK. The first originated in the Congress in 1992 and the second was arranged by the White House. While the policy of the White House and the US Department of State is based upon mediation to settle the conflict and the condemnation of the violation of the residents' rights, as well as the forcing of civilians to emigrate by both parties, the policy of the Congress originated from domestic developments in the US Congress showed its bias towards the Armenians by enacting section 907 and cutting off aid from Azerbaijan and by rarely condemning the Armenians for violations of human rights.²⁷⁸

Thus we can discern a two-edged policy over the conflict approved by the US. As long as the Popular Front party was in charge, the US called for a rapid settlement of the dispute and the establishment of peace and stability in the region, but because of the existence of large Armenian communities in the US and the need to maintain friendly links with both parties, they never openly supported the Azeris. But the fall of the Popular Front and the concern about Heydar Aliiev's bias towards Russia and Iran caused a considerable change in the US position to the benefit of the Armenians. With Aliiev's entrenched power and his independent adoption of policies from Moscow, the US favoured Azerbaijan once again, though not with the idea of giving aid to Azerbaijan to gain victory in the NK conflict. Nonetheless Aliiev's position drew US attention once more towards settling the dispute. Particularly after the

setting up of an oil consortium in Azerbaijan and the granting of 45 per cent of the international company shares to American firms, Washington was tempted to engage in the Caspian area and especially in Azerbaijan to seek a resolution of the dispute. The continuation of hostilities in NK caused problems for the oil pipelines and was a destabilizing factor preventing western companies from investing. It also put Turkey, the most important US ally in the region and a member of NATO, under pressure, none of which was to the benefit of the US.²⁷⁹

On the one hand, it seems that the US position over Karabakh was affected by considerations regarding its regional friends. On the other, the US was trying to harmonize its policy with the Russian position in the Caucasus, because it believed that the adoption of offensive tactics there would facilitate the restoration of Russia's dominance, as in the past. So the US had to avoid provoking Russia, but at the same time encourage it to continue its reforms. Furthermore the US was attempting to introduce Turkey, its old regional ally, as an economic and political model for Central Asian and the Caucasian states in order to obstruct Iran's influence and Islamic fundamentalism in the area and, in addition, to achieve its own economic goals. It is clear that these policies are essentially contradictory, because Russia and Turkey are rivals with opposing interests in the region.

Although it seemed that after signing the "Century Compact", in 1994, the US position was inclined towards Azerbaijan and Turkey, the influence of the Armenian lobbies on the US decision-making authorities not only obstructed

the adoption of pro-Azeri policies but also led to a ban on sending economic aid to Azerbaijan, which lasted for the following few years.²⁸⁰ The US Congress passed the Freedom Support under section 907 of the Freedom Support Act in 1992 for humanitarian aid to 15 republics except Azerbaijan. Those included were: Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Section 907 was enacted mainly because of the strong lobbying efforts of the Armenian community in the US, whose influential position in US politics is well-known.²⁸¹ In the words of Robert Cutler:

*“United States policy on Karabakh through much of the 1990s until the present was dominated by the extremely well-organized and politically well-connected Armenian diaspora. Legislation was passed which penalized both Azerbaijan and Turkey for their bans on trade with Armenia”.*²⁸²

Briefly, the Americans adopted two-edged and ambiguous policies over the NK conflict, thereby enhancing mutual relations with the republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and gradually took a firm stand in the Caspian region.²⁸³

During this period, then, the US was very successful in respect of its regional objectives, i.e. dominance over the energy resources of the Caspian Sea and

finding a replacement for the Persian Gulf. It also prevented the restoration of Russian hegemony in the area through the adoption of peaceful policies.

The European Union

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian and Caucasian states, the EU endeavoured to increase its influence in the region and, taking into account its better understanding of the historical, cultural and political issues, tried to avoid taking risks. The great interest of Europe in developing its standing as far as the Pacific coast, and with the members of the Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union in the OSCE, as well as its efforts to play a decisive role in conflicts such as NK, all confirm the European interest to increase its influence in that locality.²⁸⁴

The strategic advantages and location of the Caucasus, along with its mines and energy resources as well as virgin markets for European products proved to be sufficient reason for arousing European interest in this area. It is evident that European goals and plans for the region would only be achievable if there were political stability there, thus one of the main goals of the OSCE is to establish stability and peace along the borders of the republics. This proves the presence of this organization as an interested outsider in the NK problem. While the CSCE envisages numerous benefits for itself in the Caucasus, the new republics are more inclined to seek cooperation and relationships because of their historical background and the conduct of the Europeans. For this reason Armenia and Azerbaijan are very interested in

joining European institutions. Insofar as the EU, is able to have access to the the natural resources of the region, and because of its strategic importance, it tends to strengthen its relations with the Caucasian states. Moreover, it never likes to see instability on its borders because at present, the probability of the recommencement of hostilities is one of the most important obstacles to drawing nearer to Europe. European efforts can be summarized by EU cooperation with the Minsk Group.²⁸⁵ The regional states became members of the CSCE in 1992 and consequently their mutual political and diplomatic relations developed. As for the importance of the Caucasian borders for the Europeans, the establishing of stability along the republics' frontiers is considered the first aim of the OSCE agenda.²⁸⁶ The OSCE adopted this name to reflect its more permanent structure.

In February 1992, one year after the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the CSCE dispatched a delegation to the locality to discuss the status of NK plus the possibility of a ceasefire and the deployment of observers. In the middle of the same month two delegations visited the place and as a result, the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE-administered Minsk Conference, called on the "Minsk Group" on 24th March to settle the NK issue.²⁸⁷ This group was responsible for holding a peace conference in Minsk, the capital of Belarus.

Mediating efforts to carry out their decisions were unsuccessful for a number of reasons: first, the organization lacked the necessary mechanism to pressurize the hostile parties; the second reason was the existing challenge

from Russia, especially because it investigated the national interests of those members which were inconsistent.²⁸⁸

Some observers believe that although the CSCE is in charge, one should not lay all the blame at its feet, since NK was the first major quarrel in which the CSCE was involved. Lacking any firm guidelines or any practice in peacemaking, the CSCE did whatever was in its power to stop the war.²⁸⁹

The CSCE nevertheless played a vital role in settling regional conflicts, especially the NK dispute, and some agreement was achieved among the CIS, Russia and the CSCE, despite the challenges. It is worthy of note that the OSCE and the parties in dispute could not agree on the organization of the peacekeeping forces being entirely Russian because they feared that the policies of the Russian empire would once again be restored. Thus, while Russia consistently made it clear that it preferred a Russian-only peacekeeping force to be approved by the world community, the UN, NATO and the CSCE did not intend that Russia should control the territories belonging to the former Soviet Union.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, with 70 years of bitter experience of Russia's hegemony, the regional states believe that they must resort to a powerful ally, but not a neighbour, to guarantee their security. The experience of the wars in NK and Chechnya has strengthened this idea.

As already mentioned, from the beginning the first priority of the OSCE was to remove security worries from the zone. In order to guarantee security they tried to arrange political, economic and military cooperation with the newly

independent states to prevent Russia from having an absolutely free hand. Russia was the country with the most influence in Armenia, and Moscow's strategy was to keep the resolution of the Karabakh dispute under its absolute control. The effective presence of Europe in Armenia would allow Yerevan to understand that alternatives to Russian domination did exist.²⁹¹

Russia never agreed to the presence of new partners in the sphere of its security. Russia has always played a dual role in the OSCE and the Minsk Group. This contradiction is manifest in Russia's competing mediation efforts.

Briefly, the efforts made by the OSCE to have a hand in the settlement of the NK crisis and increase its influence in the Caucasus resulted in rivalry between Russia and that organization. Despite this contest, the parties involved, especially Azerbaijan, were very interested in the implementation of a role by the OSCE in the NK crisis, and considered its presence as an important factor in lessening Russia's pressure on themselves, but Russia never agreed to accept new outsiders in its traditional sphere of influence. Such rivalry not only accounts for the lack of success of the OSCE in the resolving of the NK confrontation, but also causes the trouble to be perpetuated. Although in general a ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities have been maintained in the region, the opposing interests and rivalry among the outsiders have prevented the attaining of peace because, as one might expect, the highest incidence of contradictory argumentation by the co-chairs was in the peace plans proposed to the conflicting parties. For that reason,

the Minsk Group has been unable to adopt an impartial position in the proposed solutions.²⁹²

It is clear that the greater the increase in the number of effective outsiders, the more complicated the crisis becomes. Supposing that contradictory interests exist, it is clear that we can in no way be optimistic about settling the dispute. Thus the interference of Russia obstructed the peace process because of its rivalry with the OSCE, and finally prolonged the disagreement.

Russia's actions were so uncooperative that John Maresca, the American ambassador to the OSCE, and the US special representative for Karabakh, later denounced it:

*"At first, Russia fully supported the Minsk Group. But in 1993 Russia reactivated its earlier independent mediation effort Russia wished to re-establish its dominance in the region and to exclude outsiders, namely the US and Turkey... Moscow would like to re-establish control of the former [Azerbaijan] Soviet frontier with Turkey and Iran, and to share in Azerbaijan's oil riches. To accomplish these aims, Russia has been pressuring Azerbaijan to accept the re-entry of Russian troops as ...border guards.... For leverage, the Russians have used an implicit but dramatic threat: if Azerbaijan does not comply, Russia will step up its backing for Armenia... with disastrous military results for the Azeris."*²⁹³

Despite the passing of several years following the ceasefire between the conflicting parties and because of the opposing interests of outsiders - especially Russia, which played a prominent role in the process related to the NK conflict - the present state of this dispute is unfortunately more complicated than in the past and there remain many problems and unanswered questions.²⁹⁴

As a result most Azerbaijani parties are pessimistic about the intervention of the OSCE mediators and consider that the visits of the Minsk group representatives are fruitless and futile. Some also believe that this organization acts in the same way towards the aggressor and the victim, and lacks the necessary mechanisms to carry out the UN Security Council resolutions to force the Armenians to withdraw from Azerbaijani-occupied territories. In other words, it is not able to settle the NK question. Some even believe that the Minsk group has no intention of resolving the conflict. Among these are the party of "National Independence", under Etebar Mamadev, the "Azerbaijan Popular Front" led by Ali Karmiev, and the leaders of the "Karabakh Liberation Organization."²⁹⁵

Conclusion

One of the main factors in the perpetuation of the NK conflict is the opposition of the interests of regional and supra-regional outside powers in the Caucasus. The policy of each external power in trying to achieve its goals and interests in the region is at variance with those of other outsiders. It is

clear that the consequence of such opposing interests in the area is the formation of informal coalitions, eventually leading to the establishing of a balance of power between the protagonists. Thus the settlement of the crisis by defeating one another is highly problematical. The outcome of such a balance is nothing more than a perpetuation of the strife.

It is noteworthy that the opposition of outsiders' interests in the Caucasus and the balance resulting from this is somewhat ambiguous and the exact demarcation between both sides of the equation is unclear. In such a situation the established counterpoises are usually fluid, and the coalitions are varied based on the interests that have attracted them into the region. Iran's desire to establish equilibrium in the region is in accordance with Russian interests, and as a result, coordination and harmony is observable in the positions of both states. In contrast, it is in opposition to Russia's interests in some cases. The positions of both states can be incompatible and may even cancel each other out. For instance, Iran and Russia are not particularly interested in Western influence over the region. They consider the Pan-Turkic power of Turkey as an aggravation of the instability in the area and as a danger to their territorial integrity. In the meantime Iran has no intention of allowing Russian military dominance in the region once again. On the other hand, Russia is anxious about the increase of Iran's cultural influence.²⁹⁶

Besides, they have differences regarding the routes of the oil pipelines. Russia is convinced that the Economic Cooperation Council (ECO) restricts

its influence in the area, but Iran regards it as a mechanism through which it expands its influence there.²⁹⁷

Iranian regional policy also faces a variety of reactions from Turkey. Many examples can be found in regional developments that confirm the rivalry of Iran and Turkey in establishing a sphere of influence in the region. This is why Russia and the US prefer Turkey to play a prominent role, because the policies proposed by that country for the Caucasian Republics are a good risk for the interests of the EU and the US and Russia in comparison with Iran's. In particular, the US believes that Turkey's policy in the area can forestall Pan-Islamism and pro-Iranian aspirations. On the other hand, Turkey and Iran enjoy cooperation in economic affairs, which has resulted from the propensity of both states to develop the ECO and to reach an understanding about important projects.

Tehran is generally not interested in a unilateral expansion of Turkish cultural-political influence in the region, or in Russian military control over the borders of the Commonwealth Republics. Besides, Iran does not conceal its dissatisfaction with the powerful impact of the West in the region, especially the US. It is clear that the mutually opposed opinions of the outsiders to each others' interests could eventually result in a renewal of hostilities.

In the end the contrasting and opposing interests of the outside powers involved in the NK conflict will not bring about convergence and cooperation

Chaper 5: Early Mediations and Solutions

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 provided an opportunity for a third party to transform the conflict from an internal Soviet dispute to one among several sovereign states. This structural change gave other members of the international community the chance to contribute to the resolution of the NK conflict. According to Rubin et al, where disputants are unable or unwilling to move towards an agreement on their own, third parties often become involved either at the request of the disputants or on their own initiative.²⁹⁸

In the absence of any negotiation attempts by the parties in conflict, at the beginning of the disagreement, Armenia and Azerbaijan accepted Russia, the OSCE and Iran as mediators in the dispute.

On the other hand, the efforts of the Turkish government to play such a mediatory role were rejected by both the Armenian government and the Armenians inhabitants of NK. This rejection was primarily a result of the historical antagonism between Armenians and Turks from 1894-1923. At the time and even today, the Armenians view the Karabakh conflict as a continuation of past quarrels and are hugely suspicious of the role of the Turkish government in the 1915 genocide.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati defined Iran's mediating role as an obvious response to the "natural" demand of the hostile parties from one of the neighbouring states.²⁹⁹ In addition, the close historical and geographical relationship between Iran and other countries in dispute as well as the presence of a large population of Azeris living in Iran, gave legitimacy to the mediation efforts carried out by the Iranian government.

The Iranian effort for mediation was initiated by the visit of Iran's Foreign Minister, Dr Ali Akbar Velayati, to Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK in February 1992. This endeavour was followed by meetings between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia hosted by the Iranian President, Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, in Tehran in May 1992 which led to the signing of the Tehran agreement, containing eight articles. Although several ceasefires were agreed as a result of Iranian intervention they were all very short-lived due to a lack of collaboration between the opposing parties and other countries and international organizations.

The Russian Government played a leading role in the altercation either directly or through the Minsk Group. Russia's mediation efforts began in 1991 after the visit of Boris Yeltsin and Nazarbayev, the Presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan, to Baku, Yerevan and Stepanakert. This intervention continued until May 1992 when Valdmir Kazimirov was appointed as the Russian President's envoy to the negotiations. Kazimirov and Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister, travelled many times to the region and held many meetings regarding the NK conflict. In September 1992, they proposed a 60-day cease-

fire which was rejected by the Azerbaijan authorities. The negotiations continued and finally led to a cease-fire which was to take effect in May 1994.

Russia's involvement in mediation was primarily motivated by its desire to re-establish a presence in Armenia and Azerbaijan and increase its influence in the region. Russia intended to maintain a military presence in the Caucasus as it feared a 'security vacuum' being filled by Turkey, Iran or other non-regional powers, such as the US and NATO.³⁰⁰ After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Armenia continued to rely on Russia for its security protection and therefore agreed for Russian troops to be stationed in Armenia. Azerbaijan, however, resisted Russian attempts to exert influence within its borders and deemed such a presence a threat to its national sovereignty. The disagreement in NK provided an opportunity for the CSCE/OSCE to establish itself as a regional conflict-settlement organization.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the OSCE has been struggling with the problem of how best to intervene in the problems of disputed territories. A key development in the mediation to resolve the NK conflict was the United Nations accord in late 1992 to enable the OSCE to become the leading international body in the management and resolution of the NK disagreement.³⁰¹

In 1992 at the Helsinki conference, the OSCE called for the convening of a "Conference on NK" to be held in Minsk, the capital of Belarus and arranged for a group of member states to organize the Minsk Conference. Organising and holding the conference was however more difficult than expected and in

the end, it was not held but the participating member states endorsed speedy negotiations for a formal cease-fire to be reached.

This group of OSCE members later renamed themselves the “Minsk Group” and managed to meet separately in 1992 to agree on a methodology for negotiations. The countries involved were: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Belarus, Turkey and the United States.

After the Helsinki conference the peace process entered a new phase on 24th March 1992, when Co-chairs were appointed to lead the Minsk Group. The current (July 2009) Co-chairs are from Russia, France and the United States

During the Budapest Summit of December 1994, the OSCE members strongly supported the mediation efforts of the Minsk Group and encouraged the countries in conflict to undertake negotiations with the final aim of arranging a ceasefire.

The United States of America also supported the negotiation process. This was the first example of the US participating directly in an effort to resolve a conflict on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Following Russia’s cooperation with the OSCE, a ceasefire agreement was reached in May 1994 and is still in operation. According to a report by the latter, harmonizing its own efforts with those of the Russian Federation was one of the key prerequisites for this ceasefire.

Another international organization that attempted to contribute to the resolution of the conflict argument was the United Nations Security Council which passed four resolutions regarding this dispute. The recognition of NK as a legitimate part of Azerbaijan and addressing Armenia as a party to the conflict.

In 1992, the US diplomat, Goble indicated that Azerbaijan and Armenia are not able to solve their problems and suggested that peace would be established if Meghri was exchanged for Lachine and NK. This swap would enable Azerbaijan to have a border with Nakhchivan but would mean Armenia would be deprived of one with Iran.

In this chapter I will discuss the proposals made by Goble in detail and explore the contributions made by Iran, Turkey, the OSCE and Russia in solving the NK conflict.

Mediation by the Russian Federation and CIS

Russia: The First Mediator and the Most Important Player

The Minsk Group of the OSCE was the only international organization involved from the beginning in the NK conflict and officially assumed the role of mediator, with the Russian Federation, along with the US and France, as one of three co-chairmen of the Minsk Group. However, the Russians, either individually or within the Minsk Group, operated in a unique way. Russia always has played a leading part in this dispute and in a way, can be

considered as the most influential player in the NK crisis. Russia should take credit for its exertions which resulted in the May 1994 ceasefire. Thus, in a sense, the success or failure of the mediating efforts, either prior to or after the ceasefire, can be related to a lack of interest by Russia. The Russians sometimes actively undermined OSCE peace efforts as they made parallel and unilateral mediation attempts without informing the CSCE. The final cease-fire of 16th May, in fact, occurred at a time when Jan Eliasson, the chairman of the Minsk Group, was in the region to promote the CSCE peace plan. Despite his presence, and in spite of Azerbaijani requests that he should be a party to the talks, Eliasson was not invited to take part in the cease-fire negotiations. Such a humiliation naturally lowered the standing of the CSCE.³⁰²

Therefore, bearing in mind the importance and influence of Russia's role in the settlement process, we consider its mediating function within the framework of the CIS and the Caucasus and the role of its other members.

Russian mediation began in 1991, after Yeltsin and Nazarbayev, the Presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan, made a visit to Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK.³⁰³ After this, a meeting was arranged on 23rd September in Zheleznovodsk with the participation of the leaders of the hostile parties. At the end of the negotiations, a joint declaration was signed by these countries.³⁰⁴

After the September meeting, representatives of the parties concerned sat down to negotiate in Bishkek under the supervision of Russian, Finnish, and Kyrgyzstani representatives, in which the Russians called for the observing of three principles, namely:

- The establishment of a ceasefire
- The acknowledgment the Karabakh representatives as the main force in the peace talks
- The deployment of 1,800 soldiers of the CIS.³⁰⁵

Although, these principles were in accordance with the interests of Armenian forces, the Azerbaijan Republic, under Russian pressure, signed the final declaration, with some modifications in the articles. These laid stress on the Azerbaijani occupied territories and the deployment of international observers in the buffer zone alongside those from the Commonwealth States.

In May 1992, Russia's mission as a mediator began with Vladimir Kazimirov, who was appointed as special envoy by President Yeltsin. From this moment onwards, Russia used intense diplomatic efforts under the directorship of Kazimirov, aimed at formulating Russia's plans and views concerning the settlement of the NK conflict

In June 1992, Russia presented its proposals for resolving the conflict, but these were not implemented due to the opposition of the Minsk Group. Later on, it was shown that this group's counter-proposition was not successful either. It should be mentioned that Russia presented its programme

clandestinely to the opposing parties through a secret mission, and all three parties agreed with its general points as though - according to this proposition which, was in some ways similar to the Step-by-Step Solution - the war would end and the parties would begin negotiations about different issues separately. A few days after this proposition, a US delegation entered the region and asked Yerevan and Baku to oppose the proposition. Baku acted on the delegation's advice, but Yerevan rejected it.³⁰⁶ It appears that the US was not pleased with the Russian unilateral action and not using the Minsk Group.

After autumn 1992, when the weaknesses in the Minsk Group became apparent, Russian mediating efforts aimed at calming the region were intensified. This time, many Russian politicians and military figures became engaged in establishing peace in the region. On 19th September 1992, ceasefire negotiations between the warring parties were brokered in Sochi by Pavel Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister. During this period of fierce fighting, the Russians pressed hard for a ceasefire. Grachev, was actively involved in the negotiations and his role was indicative of the extent to which the Defence Ministry was actively caught up in this dispute.³⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, Russia's main reason for presenting its proposal to settle the conflict at that time was, in fact, to be able to deploy its peacekeeping forces in the buffer zone and to exclude the Minsk Group from the mediation process. The Russian Defence Minister and Kazimirov took part in periodic and uninterrupted shuttle diplomacy between Stepanakert and Baku (from 1992-1996).³⁰⁸

In September 1992, Kazimirov, the Russian President's special envoy, proposed a 60-day ceasefire to Elchibey, the Azerbaijani President. But the Baku authorities did not respond to this proposal and it remained unanswered. In October, Russia once again made several proposals to Baku, and these too went ignored. In spring 1993, Kozyrev and Cetin, the Foreign Ministers of Russia and Turkey, chose to visit the region, with the aim of establishing a ceasefire. But the Turkish authorities wanted to carry out a deeper analysis of the basis of the conflict along with the inauguration of the ceasefire; consequently, their visit was cancelled

At this point, another difference arose between Turkey and Russia, concerning arrangements for peacekeeping forces. Although Cetin stressed in a statement that the ceasefire must be achieved with Russia's aid³⁰⁹ he declared his opposition to the deployment of Russian troops as peacekeepers in the Transcaucasus except as part of a multinational force.³¹⁰

The Russians introduced numerous measures in 1993, each of which was, for one reason or another, abandoned. For instance, in September, it brokered negotiations in Moscow with the participation of Azerbaijani and Karabakhi representatives.³¹¹ Finally, in May 1994, as a result of Russia's leading role in the tough negotiations, a ceasefire treaty was concluded between the hostile parties. Thus, on 15th April 1994, through a Russian initiative during the CIS Summit, a document relating to the NK conflict was approved, in which the implementation of a ceasefire was determined as a

prerequisite for establishing peace. Then, on the 4th and 5th of May, this time through the instigation of the Russian Foreign Ministry, a meeting made up of the representatives of the commonwealth states was held, in which all of them prioritized the cease-fire except the Azeri delegate, who finally signed it after much pondering. It is worth mentioning that Kazimirov was present at this meeting and played a vital role in convincing Aliev to agree to the ceasefire treaty. Finally, on 12th May 1994, the ceasefire treaty was signed by the Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Karabakhi parliamentary speakers in Bishkek.³¹² It was the first time that Karabakh had officially been recognized as a separate political and regional entity. This was while Azerbaijan had been trying for a long time to characterise Armenia as an aggressor to the international community.³¹³

Russia did not stop its mediation after the ceasefire and continued its efforts to achieve a final political solution. Russia's special negotiator for NK, Vladimir Kazimirov, travelled to Baku and spent several weeks with the Azerbaijani authorities there, and in Yerevan and Stepanakert.³¹⁴ But the Baku authorities had no confidence in Kazimirov and they were not terribly impressed by his conduct in the region up to that point.

After this, Boris Yeltsin met with Aliev in early 1996 to issue a declaration on the settlement of the NK crisis, in which he proposed a high degree of autonomy to the Armenians of Karabakh. He also promised to continue his efforts and follow up the resolution of the conflict by adopting an active shuttle policy. The Armenian officials showed indifference towards it and the

Karabakhis construed it as an imposed autonomy and refused to agree with it.

On 8th May 1996, Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister visited the region, as the first step of Yeltsin's shuttle diplomacy. The result of this visit was the exchange of prisoners of war. But no other visits were made and this was interpreted as meaning he was involved on other fronts. This time, the Azeris expressed their discontent with Kazimirov, the Russian President's special envoy, who was still active in the region. This finally led to his resignation. Of course, both the Armenian and Karabakhi authorities praised him for his efforts.

After the December 1996 Lisbon OSCE summit, which led to the issuing of a Azerbaijani-favoured resolution, a new stage in Russo-Azeri relations was started, as Russia made a clear stand in defending Azerbaijan's territorial integrity at the conference.³¹⁵

The following year, after negotiations with the Armenian Foreign Minister Primakov announced that Azerbaijan's territorial integrity must be observed when settling the NK crisis. He also emphasized that if there were any deviation from this principle, there would be no hope of settling the crisis.

Generally, in the past few years, Russia has been firm in this commitment to defend Azerbaijani territorial integrity. At the same time, it has not only foregone its military cooperation with Armenia, but also reinforced its military

bases, particularly in Gurmy, about 75 miles from the capital Yereven with advanced armaments. It has also enhanced its relations with Armenia as its only strategic ally in the Caucasus. According to an Azeri claim, during 1996-1998, Russia unconditionally provided Armenia with heavy armaments, valued at approximately one billion dollars.³¹⁶

Evaluating Russia's Mediating Conduct

A different characteristic can be seen in Russia's mediating behaviour. Russia has sometimes supported Armenia openly and on others has approached Azerbaijan. This assistance has even expanded to the point of military intervention and supplying arms and munitions.

Russia's has adapted its mediating conduct to correspond to its regional goals, and this has been influenced by a number of different factors. For example, one influential element concerned the efforts made by other players, particularly the United States. Russia's involvement in other diplomatic spheres has also affected its interference in the conflict.

When analysing Russia's conduct over the settlement of the NK conflict, it should be mentioned that Russian diplomacy towards regional developments generally and its views about the NK crisis specifically, were shaped in two completely different periods. In the first period, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia adopted a non-interference policy. Hence, it did not take any

independent action over the settlement of the NK conflict. Such a Russian viewpoint was affected by several factors, including:

- Lack of coordination among the members in the realm of foreign policy
- Unclear strategic interests of the Russian federation in the region, which resulted from the absence of a single consistent policy there
- Domestic political polarization
- Western orientation among the officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry and their conviction of refraining from interference in the settlement of different regional problems after the collapse of the Soviet Union.³¹⁷

After September 1991, Russian diplomacy regarding the development of the region changed to such an extent that they actively entered the region from that time up until June 1992 and began purposeful attempts in the second half of 1992. Two local and external factors underpinned this new diplomacy. A local factor made its appearance following the coordination and integration of the elements round a single policy, and the external factor was the failure of the Minsk Group in stabilizing the temporary ceasefire in NK.

In this period, we witnessed Russia's gradual engagement and persistence regarding the conflict either independently or as part of the Commonwealth of States. An example of these activities was in Sochi on 19th September 1992 where, through the mediating efforts of Pavel Grachev, the Russian Defence Minister, a ceasefire was agreed between the opposing parties. In this regard, we can also see the joint declaration signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan in

Alma-Ata in August of the same year, mediated by Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan. The two conciliation missions dissatisfied the western rivals because, during the meeting brokered by Grachev, he postponed NK's legal identity to the final stage, and also the parties discussed unofficially the possibility of deployment of peacekeeping forces.

The Russian independent and unofficial mediation in 1993-1994 was openly inconsistent with the approved principles of the OSCE and the UN. In particular, the recognition of NK as the party in dispute, and the participation of its representatives in the process of negotiations became one of the main components of Russia's proposal to settle the conflict.

It is worth mentioning that Russia emphasised several points about its activities regarding the peace process; first, the term "Conflict over NK" should be replaced in all official documents by "Armeno-Azeri Conflict"; second, it laid stress on a ceasefire as the basic prerequisite for the settlement of the dispute; and finally, it urged the need for a strengthening of the ceasefire.

Nonetheless, Russian policy regarding the NK conflict was based on it playing the part of supreme mediator so as to prevent the other players from interfering in the region, since, if the disagreement were to be settled by another country, it would mean more influence for that country and less for Russia. Furthermore, the propositions of other players did not coincide with Russian interests. Regarding the Caucasus, Russian policy was twofold.

There were those within the Russian national security bureaucracy who believed that it was in Russia's interests as a great power to reassert its control over the former Soviet borders and prevent or limit the extent of western penetration in the Caucasus and central Asia.³¹⁸

The idea that Russia was against the establishment of peace in the region, was not right. Rather, Russia was against a peace plan which increased the influence of other players and limited its own power in the region. But, on the other hand, if the solution were to increase Russia's authority, it would certainly agree with it. Of course, Russia possesses the levers needed to exert pressure on each of the belligerents in order to settle the conflict. The best proof for this claim is the fact that they have handled this difference for 70 years and have not let it turn into violence.³¹⁹

Some commentators doubt that the Russia can be as influential as the Soviet Union and believe that the only reason that the Soviet Union was successful at preventing the conflict was that it deemed it an internal conflict and thus could control all aspects and difficulties in relation to it. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia struggled to regain its position in the Caucasus and the conflict defined the strengthening of this role in the region and her supremacy in the conflict. It should be indicated that Russia is still the dominant power in the Caucasus and is interested in maintaining its grip. Maintaining the Caucasus as a part of the former USSR is in Russia's interests. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has attempted to manipulate her power through the conflicts.

All in all, by its very presence and by playing the chief role in the mediating process, Russia has proved that it will not allow other countries, or international organizations from being deployed in the region and obstructing Russia's influence and interests in the Caucasus. Accordingly, Russia was even opposed to solving the dispute through Iran's mediation, and sometimes neutralized Iran's peace-making efforts. This was when Iran assumed responsibility for human suffering in the region, after being asked to act as mediator by the warring parties in 1992.³²⁰

Mediation by the Islamic Republic of Iran

After the collapse of the USSR, Iran's strategy was based on developing relations with both states, since both Armenia and Azerbaijan are within the orbit of Iranian-Islamic culture and civilization. Taking into account the dispute between the two countries over NK, Iranian diplomacy was predicated on the creation of a balance between their relations. Accordingly, Iran was not in favour of any solution whereby only the interests of Armenia would be respected as this would dissatisfy the Moslems of Azerbaijan. Similarly, it had no intention of unreservedly supporting that country to settle the conflict. Perhaps, by the returning of NK to Azerbaijan, the Baku statesmen had other reasons for causing problems for Iran.³²¹ However, the adoption of a balanced policy by Iran indicates that it believed in this policy as the best one for regional stability and also the most influential in settling the conflict because the Turkish programme, based on unconditional support from Baku,

had made the peace process more complicated after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.³²²

When Iran became engaged in a mediating role in the NK conflict, Iranian diplomats defined their country's mediating role as an obvious response to a "natural" demand from the disputing parties of one of their neighbouring states.³²³

Besides, Iran's other motives for mediation are as follows:

- Iran spares no effort in preventing the conflict from spilling over its borders because it is a potential threat to Iran's security in its northern provinces. Thus, Iran hoped for a rapid solution to the conflict, for obvious security reasons. The military operations along its borders represent an immediate danger to Iran's security.³²⁴
- Iran's role as a regional power functions to prove its ability to adopt and persist in an appropriate foreign policy towards these new threats and challenges.
- In the light of western hostility, Iran's mediation and its efforts to prove its good intentions can have a positive effect on the improvement of its international and regional image and even on its relations with the West.³²⁵
- A prolongation of the conflict will lead to a strengthening of Russia's role, which may be tempted to settle the conflict on its own terms and conditions. These are contrary to Iran's security interests, as Russia's new military doctrine states unequivocally that it considers its strategic borders

in Central Asia to be contiguous to Iran and Afghanistan,³²⁶ and in the Caucasus to Iran and Turkey.³²⁷ Hence, Iran's concern is not founded on irrationality.

- As mentioned above, Iran has sought to create a balance of power between Armenia and Azerbaijan and has also followed a plan, aiming at the settlement of the NK conflict. To the Iranian authorities, the power of either side is not to the benefit of the peace and stability of the region and, considering the local conditions, it is a threat to Iran's national security and interests.
- Iran needs to contain Turkish influence in the region. The rivalry between Iran and Turkey dates back to ancient times and these differences have never been reconciled. Turkey is considered a "model" democratic government by the US administration, with a "leading role in the region's politics" which all the newly-independent states of the region were encouraged to follow.³²⁸ With the dissention in NK, the Iranian leadership had the chance to take advantage of Turkey's "Achilles' heel". The enmity between the Armenians and the Turks may indeed give Iran an opportunity to oppose Turkish and US policies in the region. In making good use of this enmity and of the inconsistencies in Russian policies, Iran is the only regional player which has both the incentive and interest to play a mediating role by taking a visibly impartial stand in the conflict.³²⁹

As we are already aware, through the failures of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group, (as the only mediator in the conflict) and also the reaching of a deadlock in the peace process, we are now witness to the development of

warlike views among the Azeris. Also, it is natural that through a prolonged peace process and the reaching of a deadlock, such opinions will be increasingly supported by the admirers of a military solution in Azerbaijan.

For this reason, Iran is concerned with the resurgence of military operations in the region. In this case, the spilling of the war over its borders will be unavoidable and its consequences will endanger Iran's national interests and security. Hence, the NK conflict and its settlement are directly related to Iran's interests.³³⁰

As mentioned earlier, Iran recognized the independence of the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan from the first few weeks of its declaration, and expressed its concern about the continuing of the NK conflict and Iran's efforts to establish peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia were among the first made by a regional third party.

Following the requests of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, Iran, started its mediation initiatives in the area very actively through the offices of Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iranian Foreign Minister. Following the intervention of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Iranian President, the Presidents' of both states met each other in Tehran on 7th May 1992 and signed the "Tehran Agreement". This contained eight articles, in which both parties emphasized the need to continue their meetings to achieve a basic result according to the principles of international law and the UN Charter. They also agreed to ratify the stipulated ceasefire within one week after the arrival of Iranian official representatives in

the region. Then observers from Iran and the CSCE were to be deployed in the region and finally a stable peace would be established.³³¹

Iran's mediation lasted from March to September 1992, coinciding with the partial capture of Karabakh and the occupation of Shusha and Lachin. As a result of this serious military development, Karabakhi and Armenian forces were able to capture the entire province of Karabakh and some other areas of Azerbaijani territory.

In early 1992, the Karabakhis recommenced their attacks against Azeri positions. Azerbaijan still dominated Shusha, Karabakh's second important city, and was thereby able to bombard and control Stepanakert, the capital city of Karabakh. One of the strategic goals of the Karabakhis was to capture Shusha so as to rescue Stepanakert from Azeri attacks. Another strategic objective was to occupy Lachin situated outside the autonomous province of Karabakh in order to open a corridor between Armenia and NK. Up until this time, the Karabakhis were supported and fed by the Armenian aircraft as it sought to open its land corridor to Armenia. Thus, Iran's mediation lasted six months, which was the severest period in Karabakh's affairs.

In general, the measures taken by Iran in its role as mediator were based on the following principles:

- The mediation delegation making periodic visits to the region
- The mediation delegation making propositions to the feuding parties
- The establishment of two intervals of ceasefire

- The holding of summits in Tehran

Periodic Shuttling of the Mediating Delegation to the Region

Following the Iranian Foreign Minister's visit to Azerbaijan and Armenia and the recognition of the two republics, the Iranian consulate in Baku was upgraded into an embassy and an Iranian embassy was opened in Yerevan.

After the Iranian Foreign Ministry's negotiations with the Presidents of the two states, and the visit of the high-ranking delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia to Tehran in 1992 a declaration was drafted; this was to be confirmed by the statesmen of both sides. In their negotiations with the Iranian Foreign Minister, the leaders of both countries expressed their interest in Iran's mediating efforts in the NK conflict. This request, which was the most important factor in the mediating attempts, paved the way for Iran to start its task. Considering Iran's standing, both parties expected its initiative to bring about an effective peace in the region.

After the official appointment of Iran as mediator, the Iranian Foreign Minister described the main measures and objectives on which Iran would focus in its mediating role (shown above). Then the deputy Iranian Foreign Minister and the Supreme Representative heading a high-ranking political delegation, shuttled between Baku, Yerevan, Stepanakert, Tiflis, Nakhichevan, and Moscow, making three visits during which he negotiated with the top officials of both parties³³² and took the necessary steps to balance their status and

pave the way for the preliminary negotiations. Moreover, the status, viewpoints, and degree of flexibility among the parties were studied closely. The mediating delegation visited Moscow and Tiflis in order to achieve its aims and through consultation and possible cooperation to advance future measures. In Moscow and Tiflis, Iran was praised on account of its unilateral action to conclude the conflict. The Russian reaction, although it was with the best of intentions, did not support it.³³³

The important point about this shuttle process was that it continued even after the occupation of Shusha and Lachin. Following the occupation of these two strategic and sensitive provinces, involving contact by the Azerbaijani leadership with the Iranian President in Eshgh Abad, the mediating delegation, in May 1992, started its third visit to the region. Although the political status became more complicated after the capture of these areas, the parties were still ready to resume political negotiations.

Another important point regarding these visits was the deployment of a number of Iranian representatives in Yerevan, Baku, and Stepanakert to observe and coordinate with the local officials. They were responsible for reporting deviations, actions and violations of the ceasefire treaty by the disputing parties to the mediating delegation.

Aspects of Iran's Proposals to the Conflict Parties

After preliminary negotiations with the leaders of the three warring parties and after being informed of their standpoints, in February 1992, the mediators presented their proposals to both sides in order to achieve an agreement. Iran's suggestions had been designed after careful consideration of each side's flexibility and limitations and also because they were generally in agreement with them. But Iran did realise that due to the fluidity of events, it was not expected that all points would be achieved in the short term. The most important steps in Iran's proposition to achieve a compromise or break the initial deadlock were as follows:

- Temporary and then permanent ceasefire
- Exchanging of prisoners of war and bodies of dead soldiers
- Simultaneous lifting of the blockade and return of refugees
- Deployment of observer forces to monitor the ceasefire
- Resumption of negotiations over Karabakh's future for the determination of Karabakh's legal status and the opening of transportation and communications to Karabakh

Temporary Ceasefire

One of the outcomes in Iran's mediation was to extract an agreement from all three sides to establish a temporary ceasefire and operate it. The first round of the ceasefire was realised on 20th March 1992. The mediator focused on executing the temporary ceasefire since it was vital for building mutual confidence and providing the opportunity to cool the conflict. The second

round began two months later in May and was founded on the same understanding.

Tehran Summit

After the second round visit by the mediators, it was decided that Iran's efforts to achieve basic results to settle the dispute should be dependent on the decisions and conclusions of the leaders of both states. In fact, by this approach, Iran wanted to avoid making unilateral decisions and the leaders of both countries confirmed its resolutions. In this period, the Karabakhi leaders were not invited to the conference, as the Azerbaijani authorities would not agree to sit at the negotiating table with the separatists. At that time, the Armenian authorities were agents of the Karabakhi leaders whose job it was to express their viewpoints.

Through the efforts made by the mediators during the second visit to the capitals of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the leaders agreed to attend the trilateral conference in Tehran, in the presence of the Iranian President. After two days of intense negotiations - attended by Mamadov, the acting Azerbaijani President and Ter Petrossian, the Armenian President, and brokered by the Iranian President Rafsanjani - a political declaration, known as the "Tehran Declaration" was published in May 1992. This contained the previous points announced by the mediating delegation and the declaration was signed by the leaders of the two states. It should be added that the high political authority of the mediator heightened its esteem and validity.

The main points of the declaration were as follows:

- Supporting the efforts made by Iran and other states and international organizations
- Stressing to the parties the need for stability and peace on their borders and in NK
- Requesting Iran to send its envoy to the region to negotiate with the interested parties and operate the temporary ceasefire with the support of both Presidents.
- Expressing the desire by the parties for a continuation of Iran's mediation until the final result was achieved.

The Tehran Summit can be considered as the the climax of Iran's efforts to end the conflict. In spite of effective arrangements, these attempts did not bring about positive results due to the unilateral measures taken by the Karabakh Armenians in occupying Shusha. But despite unexpected developments on the battlefields, the endeavours of the Iranian delegation continued. However, the complexity of the conflict was increased by fresh military developments, such as the changing military disposition of both sides, the plundering of occupied regions, the increase in the number of the P.O.Ws, refugees, and bodies and also the non-stop flow of armaments to the region. Thus, the future course became blurred.

Iran's Mediation and Other Players' Reactions

When Iran entered this mediation process it faced close scrutiny from Russia and the western powers. In fact, any movement which had a political and economic effect in such an important region became the core of attention for Russia and the West. Iran's independent diplomatic measures in the NK conflict drew Moscow's immediate attention. This was while Iran was successful in its initial steps. Before that, the first attempt to settle the conflict politically had been made by Yeltsin and Nazarbayev in September 1991.

As mentioned earlier, the Iranian mediating delegation proceeded to Moscow to negotiate with the Russian authorities after preliminary discussions. But the Russian Foreign Minister answered with a few diplomatic formalities such as "being ready to support any efforts, expressing hope that Iran's efforts would be fruitful." Thus, Iran's initial mediation encountered a lack of cooperation from Russia and a reluctance to exchange ideas, even though Iran showed interest in encouraging Russia to plan joint measures. But Iran's serious and active attempts were confronted by suspicion, since it did not want the power vacuum following the collapse of the USSR to be filled by other states. Thus, Iran's and other countries' attempts to settle the tensions ran into Russian mistrust. Russia never wanted Iran to go beyond normal diplomatic behaviour in the Caucasus and this view is also true in relation to Turkey and the EU.³³⁴ During this process, the progress of Russo-Iranian consultation which had little political relevance continued and after the occupation of Shusha and Lachin by the Armenian forces and the presence of the CSCE, Russia tried to

get closer to Iran in order to take limited advantage of Tehran's influence in the dispute.

Following changes in Azerbaijan's ruling system that resulted in new developments in the conflict, in March 1992, the Azeris tried to vary the effective parameters and to develop their power to manoeuvre. Hiring Afghan mercenaries and taking advantage of the oil issue were the most important levers used to exert pressure on the Armenians. In these circumstances, the Russians believed that Tehran would be a guarantee to convince the Afghan authorities to recall their mercenaries, so again Russia became interested in Iran. Such an approach can not be interpreted except as a marginal abuse. As in the past, such a view has been maintained by the Russian authorities towards Iran's role in the NK conflict.

The CSCE's attitude towards Iran's mediation can be seen in two ways: firstly, as an international organization; and secondly, as the representative of the western countries and their strategies. In 1992, after the members all the Republics of the former USSR joined the CSCE, this council set up the Minsk Group to present different solutions for the settlement of the NK conflict. The CSCE (now OSCE), ignored Iranian mediation as Iran was not a member of that organization. US views towards Iran's political behaviour also affected the CSCE's bias. In fact, the US's negative and suspicious attitude mainly affected CSCE behaviour towards Iran. From the US viewpoint, Iran's developing influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia could not be defined in the context of US interests. By entrusting the CSCE with the NK conflict,

Iran was automatically and very tactfully excluded from mediation in the conflict.³³⁵ Therefore, ignoring the advantages enjoyed by Iran in the region and even its critical role in controlling and limiting Russian influence (as was shown during the Cold War), the CSCE created a containment policy towards Iran.

Naturally, such a course of action made the situation more complex, since one of the obstacles to achieving any agreement in the peace process, even today, is the lack of even temporary unity among the different parties in the conflict. Briefly, Russia and the CSCE did not recognize Iran's important strategic role at first, as they were at this time seeking to take advantage of some aspects of its influential position.³³⁶

Analyzing Iran's Mediation

Regarding Iranian diplomacy in NK and the obstacles that destroyed Iran's mediation, it should be said that a variety of factors caused it to fail to bring about a settlement. These are as follows:

- One was the instability in the Armenian and Azerbaijani domestic situation and the effect of the NK problem on their domestic status which prevented reconciliation between the belligerents.
- A second was the lack of effective leverage to provide a political guarantee for the process and, at the same time, for the progress of the peace negotiations. Mere political trust was not enough to provide effective assurances.

Regarding the effects of domestic factors on the mediating process, Mahmud Vaezi, the deputy for Europe and the United States in the Iranian Foreign Ministry and also the Presidents envoy in this mediation stated:

*"The case of Karabakh had transformed into a pretext, in the hands of Azerbaijani political parties, to sweep to power. Karabakh, itself, was not so important, so that some groups were ready to sacrifice some territories only in order to eliminate their rivals and to win in the upcoming election. This competition was more apparent in Azerbaijan compared with Armenia, because in Armenia, the Karabakh ideal was regarded as a national issue and in the event of any difference arising among the group, they settled those disputes immediately for the sake of Karabakh interests. Therefore, the rivalry among different political groups and parties was the main reason for the failure of mediation to settle the conflict. In the meantime, the statesmen of both belligerents made the Karabakh issue very complicated, to such an extent that no one was found on either side showing flexibility and compromise regarding Karabakh. In other words, the flexibility of both sides was reduced to a minimum and, in such conditions, either to mediate or to find a solution seems impossible."*³³⁷

- A third factor was the contrariety originating from Russia's security interests in the Caucasus, along with the political challenges that threatened its security. In other words, the Russians felt apprehensive about foreign influence in the region. Thus, they sought to exclude their main rivals from the mediation scene. In this respect, they were seeking to

destroy the intervention of third parties. In the meantime, because of various limitations, Russia intended to exploit several regional and international factors to strengthen its policy with regards to the NK conflict.

With respect to this, Vaezi stated:

"Direct or indirect reactions of the Russians towards our mediation efforts convinced us that they opposed our measures. They wished to settle the conflict merely through their mediation and based on their proposed solution. Of course they thereafter followed the same policy at different stages of the mediation. Russian diplomacy was founded on the exclusion of other states in this regard. As we observed, the existing ceasefire was due to their initiatives. However, Russia's power and influence as a foreign factor had a negative impact on our role as mediator. Another negative point was Turkey's influence in Azerbaijan, especially during the tenure of the Popular Front government. This time, they created direct obstacles.

*The Popular Front merely sought power. Being informed of the evacuation of Shusha, the Karabakhis made the most of their opportunity and captured the city. Of course, some believe that this action was encouraged by Russia in order to further complicate the situation and create obstacles for Iran's mediation."*³³⁸

- Fourthly, by ignoring Iran's success in establishing the first ceasefire, the CSCE had no desire either to consult Tehran or support its efforts. This approach was probably rooted in the idea that the greater the support for Iranian mediation, the smaller Turkey's influence in the region would be.

- Another factor which added to Iran's difficulties in mediating was the logic of the progress of the war. Naturally, in an armed conflict, the belligerents pay great attention to military dominance and the exploitation of opportunities. The weakness of the Azeri front and the impact of the local political climate on the battle were the main factors in changing the geography of the war during the capture of Shusha and Lachin. Perhaps some ill-timed developments acted as a catalyst for Iranian failure in the mediation process. Maybe if the summit had not been held in Tehran or if it had been postponed most probably the sequence of events would have changed. When the Popular Front sought to take Azerbaijan in May 1992, and withdrew its forces from Shusha, it was only natural that the enemy would take advantage of this opportunity. The Karabakhis claimed that Shusha was voluntarily handed to them on "a silver platter" by Azerbaijan.³³⁹
- In addition, a lack of basic trust between the Armenians and Azeris, not to mention the fact that there were also those who believed that they could satisfy all their hopes without granting any concession to the opposite side was another reason for failure. By relying on their military might, the Armenians did not vote for any conciliation, except independence or unification, while Azerbaijan never accepted such requests. But the polarity in objectives and politics covers a particular period of the war. As for the Karabakh conflict, it was terminated by occupying Shusha and Lachin and realism was replaced by idealism thereafter.

Despite Iran's efforts to build trust between the parties, in the period of its mediation, their fear of each other, was backed by intense political and psychological propaganda, did not allow the parties to reach a mutual understanding.

- A further problem was ignoring the Karabakhian role even though it was always evident and important from the beginning of the crisis. Moreover, as a review of the conflict shows, the Karabakhis always enjoyed vast room for manoeuvre which sometimes enabled them to behave in a manner contrary to the wishes of Yerevan and Moscow. One of the major axes of Iran's mediation diplomacy was its consultation with the Karabakhis while at the same time referring the results to Yerevan. During that period, and for obvious reasons (such as its relations with Azerbaijan and the requirements of those relations), Iran was obliged to view the Karabakh factor from Yerevan's viewpoint. This fact inevitably weakened the mediation process. As an independent entity associated with Karabakh, the absence of a third-party broker might have had an impact on Iran's standing in the dispute. It was under such circumstances that the Karabakhis, showing no respect for the foreign policy aims of the Armenian President and the standing of his signature on the political document, attacked Shusha a few hours after signing the Tehran declaration.
- Finally, there was the negative impact of local developments in Iran on the mediation. Gradually a political pro-Azeri polarization was formed in Iran which did not conform to the official policy and the impartial behaviour of

the government. Before the fall of Shusha and Lachin, Iran's position was based on neutrality. A pro-Azeri bias was detectable in Iran's political behaviour; from that time, its diplomacy apparently shifted towards Baku, and this occasioned interruptions in the progress of mediation.

- In spite of Iran's reputation for mediation, unlike Russia, it lacked the necessary means or leverage to pressure the belligerents; and unlike Turkey, Iran declared its impartiality, but it is interesting that the Azeris and others tried to take advantage of the common religion and Islamic nature of the Iranian government to gain its support. In the same way, they were successful in obtaining Turkey's help, using the ethnic card. But Iran defined its policy as being based on the national interest and the stability and security of the region. If Iran had viewed the dispute as a sectarian disagreement, probably this Armeno-Azeri clash would have turned into a religious struggle which not only would have endangered the whole region but also, undoubtedly, would have made its settlement more complex for the regional and international states. Thus, Iran's stance compared to that of Turkey was more discerning.³⁴⁰
- Another important reason for the failure of Iran's mediation was the content of the document signed during the Tehran Summit. The aim of the document was not just to establish a ceasefire, but to define its future course and continuity
- But the most important factor responsible for the failure of Iran's mediation was the capture of Shusha on exactly the same day as the document was signed. It is true the Armenian side had made such a decision before

hand, as the Azerbaijani forces were using Shusha`s heights to bombard Stepanakert. When considering why the Karabakhis occupied Shusha on this particular day, there are certainly many arguments and possibilities but the most noteworthy reason that the Baku and the Iranian authorities relied on was that it was Russia`s doing. Probably, the Russians convinced Karabakh and the Armenian forces that they should postpone occupying Shusha until the very day of the signing of the ceasefire treaty and this would discredit Tehran.

Another possibility is that the Karabakhis had intentionally delayed their attack to make it coincide with Ter-Petrossian, the Armenian President`s visit to Tehran, in order to advise him that no document should be signed without their agreement. The third possibility is Dashnak`s interference to discredit Ter-Petrossian. It is also possible that a combination of these reasons may have been used by the Armenians to justify the attack on Shusha. It is fair to say that going on past events, this bears the traces of a Russian plan, since neither the Armenian nor the Karabakhi authorities are prepared to speak about this event.³⁴¹

According to Abdullah Ramezanzade, an Iranian author and academic, two factors obstructed Iran`s mediation, firstly, the Armenians` frequent victories on Azerbaijani territory, and secondly, the Popular Front government taking office in Baku. The first factor caused Iranian extremists to condemn the Armenians for squandering the opportunities for rearmament prepared for them by Iranian diplomacy. This was indeed a rejection by President Elchibey

of any mediation by Iran and it made Iranian intervention impossible.³⁴² He accused Iran of preparing a transit route for weapons to Armenia and of encouraging the Azeris in Iran to revolt and unite with Azerbaijan.³⁴³ Elchibey was President from June 1992 to June 1993. After a series of defeats in the NK conflict, he fled Baku in June 1993.

UN Measures

With the escalation of military activity in Karabakh, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions regarding the 1993 conflict. The Charter prohibited any encroachments on the territorial inviolability of states by military and non-military means, i.e. the threat of military or non-military forcible action.³⁴⁴

The first UN Security Council Resolution (number 822) on the conflict was adopted on 30th April 1993.³⁴⁵ It called for "an immediate cessation of all hostilities and hostile acts with a view to establishing a durable ceasefire as well as immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Kelbajar and other occupied areas of Azerbaijan". It also asked the CSCE to "assess the situation in the region."³⁴⁶

The Security Council adopted Resolution 853 on 30th July 1993. In this text it welcomed, among other things, the adoption of a timetable of urgent steps in compliance with Resolution 822, condemning the taking of Aghdam and the bombing of settlements, and urged the Armenian government to continue to exert its influence on the Armenians of NK.³⁴⁷

At that time, the Minsk Group held an extraordinary meeting in Paris and presented a plan to resolve the crisis, a plan which was recognized by the Security Council as being in accordance with its Resolution and it issued Resolution 874 supporting it. This was adopted on 14th October 1993, after Azerbaijan's military attack. This ruling asked the parties to execute resolutions 822 and 853.³⁴⁸ It also asked the belligerents to withdraw from newly-occupied territories immediately and to open the transit routes and telecommunications lines.

The last UN measure relating to the conflict was Security Council Resolution 884 adopted on 12th November 1993. This condemned both the violation of the established ceasefire and the excessive use of force in response thereto. Reference was made to violations of the ceasefire by Azerbaijan and the reaction of the Karabakh forces in occupying Zangilan district and the city of Horadiz. The omission of Shusha and Lachin from these resolutions attests to their special status in the Karabakh negotiations.³⁴⁹

The Security Council resolutions emphasized its views regarding the need for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal from the occupied areas, to allow international humanitarian aid to be delivered and to cooperate with OSCE mediating attempts.

Although the Security Council remained "actively apprised of the matter" and the Secretary-General was requested, in consultation with the chairman-in-

office of the OSCE and the chairs of the Minsk Group to continue to report to the Security Council concerning the situation in NK, the Security Council did not act further on the conflict, opting instead to permit the OSCE through the Minsk Group to pursue a settlement among the parties to the conflict. These can be considered as the only measures taken by the UN in relation to the NK conflict.³⁵⁰

In assessing the steps taken by the UN, it is suggested that the Security Council was biased towards Armenian interests, since it did not explicitly refer to Armenia as an aggressor in any of the adopted resolutions. And more importantly, all the resolutions lacked an executive guarantee. Consequently, the West supported the Armenians.³⁵¹

In 2004, Azerbaijan embarked on a campaign to put the issue on the agendas of international organizations such as the European Union, the European Parliament, the European Council and the United Nations. In the UN General Assembly, the investigation of the NK conflict issue was postponed to an undisclosed date by the intervention of the US ambassador.³⁵² It seems that the United States and Armenia were not pleased about the UN resurrecting the discussions. But according to some observers, entrusting the responsibility of the settlement to the OSCE would overtake the UN's responsibility regarding this dispute and it would have to fulfil its international commitments according to the constitution and international law. Thus, it was probable that the UN would enter the NK peace process again.³⁵³

The “Goble Plan” of Territorial Exchange

As far back as 1988, a group of lawyers headed by Andrei Sakharov, proposed a model for the solution of the Karabakh conflict. It was based on "moving apart" the Armenians and Azeris, but at that time this alternative failed to become a matter of discussion. Then Paul Goble, an American proposed something similar in his article "Coping with the NK Crisis"³⁵⁴. Goble`s solution did not seem very important at the time because he wrote his article after he had left the post of US Secretary of State. The parties did not make any immediate comment about Goble`s solution until 1999-2001 when this plan was seriously considered during talks between the two Presidents and it was put forward again by different organizations.

He believed that the Azerbaijan Republic and the Republic of Armenia were unable to solve the conflict themselves. He argues that a solution was not possible, if the sides tried to return to the situation existing before the start of the current struggle in 1988, and therefore no solution was fully envisaged. Goble argues the *status quo ante* was maintained thanks to the USSR. Now the situation has changed, it means finding a new approach to the conflict.

According to Goble, the following approaches are conceivable as alternatives to settlement:

- To immediately oust or kill Armenians living in Karabakh, who oppose Azerbaijan with boycotts and tough restrictions and risk bringing about a

deplorable future. In such a situation, Azerbaijan would suffer long-lasting economic and political seclusion. Besides, this would be impossible due to the Armenians' military superiority and even for the Azeris, it would also be out of the question for moral reasons.

- The restoration of Russia's sovereignty, which would be even more regrettable.
- To mobilize a great number of international peacekeeping forces to keep these sides apart. But would be unworkable for a considerable length of time.
- The handing over the NK Autonomous Oblast to the Armenians
- A territorial swap.³⁵⁵

Goble sees the key to providing a stable peace in the region in exchanging territories. However, he has modified his idea several times and presented different versions of his plan of territorial exchange.

In his first proposition, in 1992, Goble suggested handing over Meghri in exchange for the Lachin corridor plus NK, that is, in lieu of Meghri, Azerbaijan would hand over NK to Armenia and the Lachin corridor for its access to Karabakh. This would enable Azerbaijan to have an immediate border with Nakhichevan and a friendly state, Turkey, but Armenia would be deprived of having a direct border with Iran, which in the past, has proved a vital link for the Armenians.

Map 1 shows the exchanges of territory that could have taken place as part of this plan



Map 1: Goble's Peace Plan: The map shows how the changes in territory, particularly relating to Meghri would work – notice in particular how Armenia would be deprived of its border with Iran.

In 1996, Goble removed the weak points from his plan and brought in some amendments. In particular, he proposed to hand over part of the NK Autonomous Oblast to Armenia and in return, the southern region of Armenia, Meghri, plus another part of NK would be given to Azerbaijan. The latter would thereby have a land bridge with Nakhichevan and Armenia's connection with Iran would be through a corridor from Meghri, where some international forces would be deployed.³⁵⁶

After the failure of his first proposal, Goble added other amendments, to what was known as "Goble Plan 2". Through this he would make some changes in the Turkey's and Azerbaijan's borders.

Based on this approach, the southern region of Armenia and the western region of the Azerbaijani Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic would be exchanged. In this plan, the nine kilometre border between Azerbaijan and Turkey would be cut off, consequently Azerbaijan would be deprived of direct access to Turkey and would only have access to the Nakhichevan borderland, namely, Sadrak would be handed over to Armenia and then this state would have a direct border with Iran. Armenia's new common border with Iran would be about 100 km closer to Yerevan, but its length would be shortened by 25-30 km. Of course, because it overlooks the Lachin and Sadark corridors and is several km wide, the journey would only take one or two hours. But, the lack of a common border with Turkey did not appeal to Azerbaijan either. This issue became the subject of a controversy which was quashed by granting a corridor instead of a region, namely Meghri, which was to be controlled by international and Armenian peacekeeping forces.³⁵⁷

The Armenians argued that in both cases, Meghri (which form part of Armenia and enjoys strategic importance) would be sacrificed on account of the conflict. Based on the first plan, Meghri would be exchanged for the Lachin corridor and on the second plan for Sadrak.

In Goble's plan 2, the status of Karabakh is ambiguous. Two views were put forward in this regard: first, Karabakh and Lachin would be recognized as part of Armenia's territory and, second, Karabakh would be accepted as an independent state by the international community. It was also stated that the siege of the Armenian-Turkish border would have to be lifted.³⁵⁸

In general, none of Goble's Plans for an exchange of territories was officially supported by either side. In particular, the people and the political parties both pro and anti government. Armenia and NK reacted against these two plans and consequently the government rejected them.

However, according to media information and opposition figures in Armenia, some variants of the territorial exchange, similar to the Goble plan were seriously considered during the talks between the presidents of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Republic of Armenia in 2000-2001, but to little avail. However, it seems that the solution to the exchange of corridors was still on the agenda of both sides.³⁵⁹

Position of the Republic of Armenia regarding the“Goble Plan”

The Armenian authorities have repeatedly stated that the idea of a territorial swap is not acceptable to them. During his face-to-face meetings with his Azeri counterpart, in 2001, Robert Kocharian openly declared that Armenia would not agree to hand over Meghri to Azerbaijan. He also specified that the plan he had discussed with Aliev was totally different from the Goble plan. He

explained that they had only discussed granting some transit facilities to Azerbaijan through the Meghri corridor as opposed to gaining complete control of the Lachin corridor. Meanwhile, the Meghri corridor would be completely dominated by Armenia as before. According to Kocharian, this plan followed its own logic and was expected to bring long-lasting peace to the region.³⁶⁰

On the other hand, during his talks with the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group, in 2001, the Armenian Prime Minister, Markarian - even considered talking about the exchange of territories as unacceptable. He also stated that Armenia would not agree to negotiate the exchange of territories which enjoyed strategic importance. Moreover, Serge Sarkisian, the Armenian Secretary of the Security Council and the Defence Minister, expressed his opposition to the idea of a territorial swap several times.³⁶¹ But apart from the Armenian authorities, we are certain that all political movements, parties and figures expressed unanimous opposition to handing over Meghri to Azerbaijan considering it a risk to the security of Armenia. In particular, an organization known as the *Militia*, which had great influence in the army, and other militants, strongly opposed this plan. This group openly threatened the authorities when the opposing party made a pronouncement in the media, denouncing the Kocharian agreement and accusing it of handing over Meghri to Azerbaijan.³⁶² It is noteworthy that the rumour about handing over Meghri was exaggerated to some extent in that its details even suggested that everyone who lived in Zangezour province would receive five to ten thousand dollars assistance because of their displacement. Thus, the Zangezour

representatives protested against this plan in the National Parliament of Armenia.³⁶³

Armenia would certainly appreciate the annexation of NK and the Lachin corridor, however, the price they would have to pay for this would be their border with Iran, which in the past had proved to be a life-line for the country. Without this border, Armenia would be landlocked between its historical adversaries. Thus, Armenia was even less likely than Azerbaijan to accept this solution.³⁶⁴

Since the Lachin corridor is under the control of Armenia, the Armenian people did not approve of exchanging this corridor with a similar one or granting a region to Azerbaijan through Meghri, as it is the only land passage between Iran and Armenia and is surrounded by Turkey. Clearly most parties in Armenia agreed that the price of settlement of the NK conflict should be paid for by Armenian land.³⁶⁵

In general, the idea of a “territorial swap” would have several effects on Armenian national security and interests, namely:

- Armenia would not benefit very much from a “territorial swap.” Only taking control of the Lachin corridor would provide the permanent connection between Armenia and Karabakh and this would guarantee partial security for Karabakh.

Armenia would lose its direct access to Iran, which is strategically important as it would be surrounded by historical enemies.

In the event of Meghri being taken over, though it can be argued that Armenia's southern gate be closed and Turkey would take control of the Russia-Armenia-Iran axis and would not allow Russia or Armenia to connect to India via the ocean through Iran.³⁶⁶

Although some Armenian authorities do not appreciate Iran's role, the vital importance of their border with Iran has been proved many times. In the event of any threats from other areas, it is the only escape route for Armenia.

- The Republic of Armenia and NK together would lose their strategic importance and be turned into normal geographical entities. In particular, NK would lose its geopolitical value in the region, as militarily, taking over this region from outside is impossible. History shows that other powers could conquer Karabakh if they began internal operations. Naturally, the separation of Karabakh aims at destroying its geopolitical value. Since far back in history, distinguished military figures have been quoted as saying that he who takes over Shusha, will be in possession of Karabakh and he who is in possession of Karabakh will take possession of the whole of the Transcaucasus. This outcome is not now realistic but shows the importance of Karabakh in the Caucasus. The military importance of Karabakh is revealed through these quotations.
- The loss of Meghri would diminish Armenia's security and the ground would be prepared for the eclipse of Armenian domination.

- The handing over of Meghri to Azerbaijan, would in turn have negative effects in Armenia which would bring about distrust in society and consequently lead to local instability and civil war.
- It would have negative effects on Armenia's economy and especially trade because the implementation of this idea would make Armenia's trade more complicated.
- By building a land bridge to Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan would directly be able to transport Caspian oil to Turkey and then to western markets without it being moved through any third country - but Armenia would sustain a loss. Although the probability of routing the pipeline through Armenia is very small, it would be possible under certain conditions at the present time. But after handing over Meghri or any other corridor, this chance would vanish.

The American diplomat, John J. Maresca, in his famous article “A Peace Pipeline to End the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict” argues that: “Despite its traditional hostility towards Turkey and Azerbaijan, Armenia would be a reliable partner if an agreement could be reached. The possibility that a pipeline could be built across Armenia could encourage rational Armenians to join in an honest effort to find a solution to the Karabakh conflict.”³⁶⁷

Azerbaijan's Position regarding the “Goble Plan”

The Azerbaijani authorities up until now have officially rejected the plan for the exchange of territories. We have witnessed the appearance of

contradictory viewpoints over this solution by the Azeri officials, as they are very reluctant to renounce sovereignty over NK. Even more, they categorically refuse to even discuss yielding sovereignty over the Lachin corridor, as it was mainly Azeri-populated before 1988 and was part of the Azerbaijan Republic itself, not of the NKAO. Hence, there is reason to believe that even given the land gain of Zangezour, the Azeri side would be unlikely to accept such a solution.³⁶⁸

However, some authorities speak about the necessity of having a land connection with Nakhichevan. Ghuliev, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, considered the gaining of the Meghri corridor in exchange for the Lachin corridor, in 1999, as a good move for his country, through which it will make possible for Azerbaijan to guarantee security for Nakhichevan.³⁶⁹

One of the reasons for the ambiguities and differences in Azerbaijan regarding this idea has to do with Turkey's politics and leanings. Turkey is greatly interested in the Meghri corridor to Nakhichevan and it is for this reason that the Azeri authorities lack enough power to resist Turkey, and hence it is more probable that they would implement the wishes of Ankara in the end.

Turkey's views in supporting the exchange of Meghri have reached such a point that it would assent to the annexation of NK by Armenia, only if the Armenians agreed with the exchange. Heydar Aliiev, the Azerbaijani ex-President, in 2000 had announced that if Armenia offers the exchange of

Meghri with Lachin, then he would be ready to examine it. It is perceived from his expression that this kind of exchange had not been discussed by either president and if the Armenians so desired, Azerbaijan would agree with it.³⁷⁰

Simultaneously, in an opposite position, Aliiev declared that he had reached an agreement over a territorial swap with his Armenian counterpart in Paris in 2001. Consequently, Serge Sarkisian, the Armenian Secretary for National Security Council and the Defence Minister, declared decisively on July 17th that in the Paris talks, the Meghri corridor was not referred to.³⁷¹

The plan for a “territorial swap” produced had the following effects in Azerbaijan, some of which are as follows:

- Geopolitically, Meghri is more valuable than Lachin, as it cannot be replaced by Kalbajar to provide the connecting line between Armenia and Karabakh, but there is no other line to take the place of Meghri. Moreover, in case the plan is agreed upon (unlike Armenia) there would not be any reduction in Azerbaijan's neighbours.
- By implementing the plan, Azerbaijan would gain a land bridge with Nakhichevan and its ally, Turkey.
- Turkey would not face any problem in fulfilling the Pan-Turkism idea, thereafter, since it would gain direct access to all Turkish-populated regions from Eastern Europe to Central Asia.
- It would be allocated the building of the Baku-Nakhichevan-Igdir railroad. This would mean that Turkey would be able to send Azerbaijan military assistance if necessary.

- It would be possible to construct a variant of the Baku-Nakhichevan-Jihan pipeline, which would be shorter and more controllable than the Baku-Tiflis-Jihan pipeline.
- Economic and trade relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan would be developed and transportation of cargoes would be cheaper and easier.
- Turkey`s goal of dominating the Central Asian states was created by the collapse of the USSR. This policy has been supported by Western powers and United States`, which intended to introduce Turkey as a "model" to the newly independent states,

NK`s position regarding the “Goble Plan”

Like their Armenian counterparts, the NK authorities have expressed their negative and opposing views over the plan for the exchange of territories and rejected them as a solution for the settlement of the NK conflict. Ashot Sarkisian, the Chief of the Legal and Governmental Commission of the NK parliament believes that this scenario will lead to an unjust territorial swap among Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK. He also suggested that all Armenians are aware of the consequences this plan will bring for them if it is carried out. Despite gaining territories, Armenia and NK will be deprived of their common border to Iran, a gateway to the Middle East and the wider world. Besides, should this plan be executed, the direct and strategic relations of Russia-Armenia-Iran and also the trilateral cooperation of Iran-Armenia-Greece, which crucially ensures Armenia's national interests and security, will be damaged. He concluded that any retreat from the basic positions would mean

suicide for Armenia and NK. In this interview, in 1999, he warned that those in favour of this plan should know that they will face a strong reaction when making decisions either in Armenia or NK.³⁷²

External positions regarding the “Goble Plan”

The United States supported the idea of exchanging territories as the solution to the NK conflict. Madeleine Albright, The former US Secretary of State, and Talbot, the Under-Secretary of State, had participated in negotiations with the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territorial swap. Turkey is one example of a state that is in favour of this option, as it will benefit the most from this plan. Thus, it is making every endeavor to convince Armenia to agree to hand over Meghri. Turkey has also laid this down as a condition to opening its border to Armenia and raising its blockade and economic sanctions. It seems that Turkey had no problem in convincing Azerbaijan in this matter. The main obstacle to this solution - which has actually been advanced, among others, by Turkey's former Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit - is that it is unlikely to be accepted by either side.³⁷³

But, other neighbouring states like Russia and Iran are opposed to this plan as the solution to the conflict and have expressed their dissatisfaction. Iran has declared that it is against the changing of the borders in the region. Russia rejects this plan too.³⁷⁴ The reasons for the disapproval are clear, as both states will be detached from the region via this plan. The north-south line will be weakened and Russia will not be able to gain access to other regions

through Iran. On the other hand, Turkey will have a chance to influence a large area.³⁷⁵ France is another opponent of this plan as it is averse to *de facto* US dominance over this region.

The March 1992 CSCE / OSCE Resolution

The peace process entered a new stage on 24th March 1992, when the CSCE held its conference in Helsinki. The CSCE commenced its mediating attempts and peace talks by issuing a declaration. It was here that the European Foreign Ministers expressed their deep concern about the continuing escalation of the armed aggression in and around NK and the increased suffering and loss of life of the inhabitants. They called upon all parties to exercise restraint and held an extensive discussion of ways and means to end the hostilities, bearing in mind the implications for regional and international security which could result from its continuation and further extension. The ministers agreed that the CSCE must play a major role in promoting a peace process relating to the conflict. They agreed that the situation in and around NK required further CSCE action.

In the same conference, the Foreign Ministers mandated the chairman-in-office of the CSCE Council of Ministers, Jiri Dienstbier, to visit the region in order to contribute, in particular, to the establishment and maintenance of an effective ceasefire as well as to the creation of a framework for an overall peaceful settlement. The ministers expressed their firm conviction that a conference on NK under the auspices of the CSCE would provide an ongoing

forum for negotiations towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis on the basis of the principles, commitments and provisions of the CSCE. Thus, they requested the chairman-in-office of the CSCE Council of Ministers to convene such a conference as soon as possible.

They agreed that this conference, which was to take place in Minsk, would have include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Czech Federal Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkey and the United States of America. Elected and other representatives of NK would be invited to the conference as interested parties.³⁷⁶

It should be mentioned that the main reason or deciding factor that caused the UN to entrust the responsibility for leading the negotiations in the conflict to the CSCE is not clear, but it can be inferred that political interests were a factor in this decision. It is interesting to speculate that by entrusting the CSCE with the NK dispute, it would make possible the exclusion of Iran as western powers wanted to keep out of the Caucasus. Iran being a member of the UN, but for understandable reasons not of the CSCE, was automatically and very tactfully excluded from the mediation.³⁷⁷

It can be argued that this is one reason why the mediation of the CSCE – later on the OSCE - has not brought about a settlement of the conflict.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Russia, Iran, Turkey and the OSCE all have conflicting motives and interests in the Caucasus and these form the bases of their different approaches to the resolution of the NK conflict. Touval and Zartman who believe that mediators in any conflict are “players in the plot of relations around the conflict, with some interest in its outcome; otherwise they would not mediate.”³⁷⁸

As Boris Yeltsin stated: "Russia continues to have a vital interest in the cessation of all armed conflicts on the territory of the former USSR."³⁷⁹. Russia has been pursuing its own interest in the Caucasus to bring all three countries under control. This policy has been realised by the action of the Russian Government in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and NK. The main goal of Russia in the mediation of the resolution of the N-K conflict has been to counter NATO, the OSCE and Iran.

Russia as a regional actor has always followed its national interest, as has been discussed and it should be remembered that it was Russia and not the OSCE that brokered the ceasefire.

Russia's major aim was to return the Southern Caucasus to its direct political authority as it was before the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Russia wanted to broker a ceasefire and play a leading role in the N-K negotiations to keep its leverage in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.³⁸⁰

Throughout the NK conflict one can see the objectives of the Russian government reflected in its shifting attitudes towards the disputing parties. For example, under the USSR, government policy was to support the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. After the break-up of the Soviet Union however, Russia began backing Armenia, arguably because it allowed the stationing of Russian troops on its territory from 1996. When Azerbaijan joined the CIS and accepted Russian troop deployments, Russia switched allegiance and began training the Azerbaijani military.³⁸¹

The Russian policy of acting as mediator in this conflict has prevented other players from acting in the region. It therefore comes as no surprise that all the mediation attempts carried out by other countries in the area have not led to any substantial change.

The Iranian government has recognized the importance of including the Karabakh Armenians in the negotiations and therefore recommends holding direct meetings between them and Azerbaijan. The Karabakh Armenians reportedly stated that “Iranian mediation looks far preferable to Russian mediation, simply because Tehran is proposing significantly better starting conditions for the initiation of talks than Moscow.”³⁸²

Russian policies have resulted in Iranian efforts proving unsuccessful, as the Iranian deputy Foreign Minister and special envoy of Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mr Vaezi stated: Direct or indirect reactions of Russians towards our mediation

efforts convinced us that they opposed our measures. They wished to settle the conflict merely through their mediation and based on their proposed solutions. Of course they followed the same policy at different stages of the mediation thereafter. Russian diplomacy was founded on expelling all other states in this regard. As we observed, the existing ceasefire was due to their initiatives. Anyhow, Russia's power and influence as a foreign factor had a negative impact on our mediating role.³⁸³

The main task of the Minsk Group from 1992 has been to attain a sustainable ceasefire and convince the parties to get involved in negotiations in order to settle the conflict. Unfortunately, this second aim has been hampered by disagreements with the Russian government

Until December 1996, all the OSCE draft peace proposals avoided discussing the problem of the status of NK although it was the most contentious issue. Furthermore, the problems related to the NK mediation process could be divided into two categories: first, "military technical" difficulties or "the removal of the consequences of the war" which include the occupied territories, the blockades, the refugees and human issues. Secondly, the issue of the status of NK

As discussed, Russia has pursued unilateral initiatives that could be the key in the resolution of this struggle. In addition, the OSCE failed to honour its commitments in regard to the deployment of peacekeeping troops in NK mainly because of disagreements with Russia over the nature and composition of the intended international peacekeeping force. Also, the lack

of cooperation among members of the Minsk Group has hampered the peace process even further.

It can be said that this conflict will remain unresolved as long as the Russians are co-chairing the Minsk Group. There are also other regional actors, such as Iran and Turkey who consider their national interests to lie in a continuation of this stalemate. In addition, the impasse allows Russian to have authority to influence the entire region.

Nevertheless, the major political events that renewed the Minsk Group's dynamism as the exclusive mediator in the NK conflict were the 1994 and 1996 OSCE summits, in Budapest and Lisbon, respectively. Despite the fact that the OSCE was unable to deploy an international peacekeeping force in NK, it submitted a proposal at the Lisbon summit as a framework for the settlement of the NK conflict based on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and, at the same time, provided a high degree of autonomy for the Karabakh Armenians in Azerbaijan.

Chapter 6: The Minsk Group Process

Introduction

This chapter will look at the formation of the Minsk Group, its objectives and its various attempts, at providing a resolution to the NK conflict. After providing a background to the formation of the OCSE, and the Minsk Group and how their structure has changed in respect to the NK crisis, this chapter will then analyse the proposed solutions. Proposals such as the Package, Step-by-Step and Common State approaches will be discussed together with the reasons why they have all failed to date. This chapter then concludes by providing reasons which account for these failures from 1992 to the present day.

The Formation and Evolution of the Minsk Group

The Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest security organization and covers a geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The OSCE's secretariat is in Vienna and it currently has over 4000 employees.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) opened in Helsinki in July 1973 during the period of the dispute between east and west; the market-oriented capitalist western system versus the communist, planned system of the east. This convention was attended by 35 countries including

all the European states (except Albania, but including the Soviet Union). It was followed by the Geneva meeting in September and resulted in the final act in Helsinki, which was signed by all the member countries. This meeting took place from 30th July to 1st August 1975.

The OSCE was established under Chapter VIII of the United Nations charter. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War required changes in the role of the CSCE as it sought to define its role. The beginning of these changes can be traced through two important meetings held in 1990 - one in Denmark and one in France. The first meeting, held from the 5th to the 29th June led to the adoption of a document for Pan-European public order. In the second meeting, held in November 1990, the document charter of Paris for a new Europe was adopted.

Under this charter, several new offices were established including the Council of Foreign Ministers; the Administrative Secretariat; the Conflict Prevention Centre; the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Office for Free Elections. The approving of this charter made the organization far-reaching and helped to develop new historical changes.

Two years later, at the Budapest Summit in 1994, the tendencies expressed in the Paris Charter and the Helsinki Summit were developed further. This summit focused on the task of implementing change in the CSCE. It decided to alter the name of the organization from the CSCE to the OSCE, which

gave it more political impetus, and several practical decisions regarding previous agreements on Europe's security system were taken.

In the Lisbon Summit in 1996, a declaration on a common and comprehensive model for the 21st century was adopted. One of the major outcomes of this summit was that the CSCE, which was assigned to become a forum for dialogue and negotiation for a European security system, was to be created.³⁸⁴

In the first 15 years of its existence, the OSCE served primarily as a mechanism to guarantee the stability of the European post-war order against the background of the two confrontational systems of east and west. The end of the Cold War liberated the organization from the stalemate between the east and west.

The OSCE deals with conflicts through both diplomatic and peace-keeping operations. Its diplomatic offices play a soft role in conflict resolution, whereas peace-keeping operations play a harder role in the organization of security and cooperation in Europe.

The organization has the task of setting standards for intra-state and also inter-state behaviour. In security management, the OSCE is an instrument for conflict prevention, political crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. In Europe, the future conventional arms-control forum will be the OSCE.

All decisions in the OSCE are taken on the basis of consensus. In the case of high-tension areas where a potentially overt conflict looms, it is desirable that the OSCE should have the ability to take decisions promptly and undertake actions rapidly. This ability to make swift and rapid decisions is thought to have diminished due to the great need to reach consensus for any decisions made.

The OSCE is the only organization in Europe with a mandate to operate throughout the CIS. The office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is in Warsaw. The documentation office is located in Prague. The Commissioner on National Minorities is in The Hague.

The decision-making body of the organization is the Council of Ministers, which meets once a year. The political direction of the organization is given by the Heads of States who hold meetings when needed. The last such meeting was, in fact, held in Istanbul in 1999. The OSCE currently has 65 members.³⁸⁵

A key development in the mediation of the NK conflict resolution was the United Nation's agreement in late 1992 to let the OSCE become the leading international body in the management and resolution of the NK dispute.³⁸⁶

In 1992, the OSCE called for a peace conference to be held in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, and formed the organization called the Minsk Group, consisting of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, the United States, France, Italy,

Turkey, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and a representative from NK. The OSCE became officially involved in the NK disagreement on 24th March 1992, when its Ministerial Council adopted a decision to convene in Minsk (Belarus) under the auspices of the OSCE to provide an ongoing forum for the negotiation of a peaceful settlement of the NK conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.³⁸⁷

The ceasefire arranged by the OSCE and Russia has been in place since May 1994. There have been meetings and negotiations attempted by the Minsk Group which have been chaired jointly by France, Russia and the United States. Unfortunately, such meetings have not led to any developments in the resolution of the conflict, and negotiations still remain deadlocked.

Formation of the Minsk Group: Goals & Tasks

In February 1992, Jiri Dienstbier, the chairman of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) commissioned 12 reporters to visit the Caucasus and present their evaluation of the NK conflict.³⁸⁸ They reported in their conclusion that the belligerents agreed to cooperation in the plans of the CSCE, and declared themselves prepared to welcome the involvement of the CSCE in the settlement of their conflict.³⁸⁹

The Helsinki Additional Meeting of the CSCE on 24th March 1992 requested the chairman-in-office to convene a conference on NK as soon as possible

under the auspices of the CSCE to provide an ongoing forum for negotiations towards a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the basis of the principles, commitments and provisions of the CSCE.³⁹⁰ Since the mediation of the NK conflict was not really practical with such a large group, a smaller group was formed comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Belarus, Turkey and the United States. This committee was named the Minsk Group. This conference was scheduled to be held in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, but the time was not ripe for holding it. Thus, the Minsk Group was charged by the CSCE with finding a political solution to the dispute, therefore, all work related to its mediation was termed the Minsk Conference. The main aim of this body was to play a mediating role to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table to hold talks and reach an agreement over the political status of NK.³⁹¹

On 6th December 1994, at the conclusion of the Budapest Summit, it was agreed to appoint a co-chairmanship for the Minsk Group. Furthermore, the heads of states and their respected governments expressed a willingness to deploy a multinational peacekeeping force in the region, as an essential part of the overall settlement of the disagreement.

On implementing the Budapest decision, the chairman-in-office issued a mandate to the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group on the 23rd March 1995.

Objectives of the Minsk Group

On the basis of the above-mentioned documents, the main objectives of the Minsk Group may be summarized as follows:

- To provide an appropriate framework for conflict resolution by way of ensuring the negotiation process supported by the Minsk Group
- To obtain an agreement from the parties for the cessation of the armed strife so as to sanction the convening of the Minsk Conference
- To promote the peace process by deploying CSCE multinational peacekeeping forces
- To visit the Minsk Group co-chairs, to talk to the warring groups, and to hold meetings with the chairman-in-office and the members of the Minsk Group to brief them on the process

The Minsk Group was to be considered successfully concluded if the objectives referred to above were fully met.

From 1997 onwards, it was decided that France, Russia and the United States would jointly chair the Minsk Group. At that time, the representatives of the co-chairs were ambassadors Henri Jacolin of France, Yuri Merzlyakov of the Federation of Russia and Steve Mann of the United States of America.³⁹² These positions are now held by Ambassadors Bernard Fassier of France, Yuri Merzlyakov of Russia and Mathew Bryza of USA, the US Deputy Secretary of State.

Analyzing the Evolution of the Minsk Group: Organisational Developments

The Minsk Group of the OSCE has been the subject of basic and structural developments since it was established.

It was formed in the short term because of Russia's weakness. On the one hand, the OSCE's orders and demands were not enforceable on the parties in dispute. In particular, this organization had no experience in the settlement of conflicts and neither side was interested in negotiation. This issue was especially important for the Karabakh Armenians who were well aware of their military superiority. At that time, the OSCE members were not yet ready to send peacekeeping forces to the region. As the Bosnia crisis had ignited at the same time, the international peacekeeping forces were facing many problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina and they had no incentive to send these troops to the outlying region of Karabakh.

The US proposed a greater role for Iran in Karabakh mediations at the April 2001 talks between Armenian and Azeri Presidents in Key West.³⁹³

The Minsk Group was originally dominated by smaller parties who had limited influence. The mediation process was thought by all parties to be impartial since countries such as Sweden, Italy or Finland had little or no interest in the South Caucasus. However, these countries could only act as mediators in the true sense of the word since they possessed no incentives, no carrots or sticks to convince the belligerents to adopt a more compromising attitude.

The group was "too large and too low level" for serious negotiation and this caused changes in the structural organization of the Minsk group.³⁹⁴

So, only one chairman was foreseen for the Minsk Group in the first year. Italy was elected as the first chair and then followed by Sweden and Finland. In 1997, when Finland was chairman, the single chair became a co-chair or rather a board of directors. This time, Finland and Russia jointly chaired the Minsk Group.³⁹⁵

The Italians who chaired the first two years did not play an active role as chair and was largely ineffective. These factors forced them to desist from the obligation after only two years. Sweden was the second state elected in December 1993 to take the chair after Italy. Despite the pressures resulting from the escalation of the war, these states actively continued their endeavours, but in practice rivalry over the mediating efforts prevented the Minsk Group from carrying out the task effectively. One of the most active states, to engage in mediation, was Russia. After joining the Minsk Group, Russia energetically continued its parallel mediation. This made the Minsk process more complex and created some problems in its relations with other members.

Since Finland was Russia's neighbour and had a better understanding of its viewpoint, it offered to accept the chair of the group in April 1995, but then, in order to stop Russia's individual efforts, it was decided that Russia and Finland should jointly chair the Minsk Group. This situation continued until

Finland stepped down. Germany volunteered to succeed Finland and this move was welcomed by the three parties and other states, but as Frank Lambach was appointed as their representative in the Minsk Group, a person whom Baku, Karabakh and the United States disagreed with, the Germans left the group. This time France showed an interest in taking on the responsibility and was supported by Baku, Karabakh and Yerevan. Since the United States decided to enter the frame of co-chairs, the problems were accentuated and France was asked to leave but it would not stand down. Such a disagreement resulted in three countries holding the position of Co-chair instead of the previous two. On the first of January 1997 France succeeded Finland as co-chair and because of Azeri displeasure the US became a third co-chair on the 14th February. On 6th December 1994 in the Budapest summit, a co-chairmanship was set up for the peace process. First Russia and Sweden were co-chairs. Finland replaced Sweden in 1995 and announced its termination at the end of 1996. Then the US asked the three parties to disqualify the French chairmanship and Baku responded. The Armenian society in France and their influential and powerful lobby in Paris were a pretext for the Baku authorities to veto the chair of France. But Armenia objected and recommended Russia, France and the United States as triple co-chairs of the Minsk group on 14 February 1997.³⁹⁶

However, during this period, political games played a decisive role in the appointment of the chair. As mentioned earlier, during the first few years the chair was independent, but later the position was made up of two people and finally it became a triumvirate. Of course, either of the former chairs - Italy or

Sweden - could have been a co-chair member, but since this task involved a heavy responsibility, they declined. Naturally, this office was very important to the Russians and they remained in their post. Baku's disapproval and their pretext for objecting were completely illogical, as they claimed that enormous numbers of influential and powerful Armenians lived in France, though Armenian society in the US was larger and more powerful.

By making changes in the arrangement of the Minsk Group chairmanship, the Minsk process was altered as well. Formerly, the decisions were made by the eleven members and the chair was unable to come to a decision on its own, but in 1997 when it was decided that three members should jointly chair the group, the decision-making process was totally transformed. Turkey and some other members were not satisfied (and despite not being among the co-chairs, they remained a part of the Minsk Group structure as before. But since they were ignored by the co-chairs when it came to decision-making, they were offended and some of them refrained from collaborating with the Minsk process thereafter. For instance, Belarus had decided to co-operate by holding the Minsk conference there. Hungary and Germany, who were ignored in the decision-making, were upset by this and gradually withdrew their cooperation from the Minsk Group.

Lastly, through the direct negotiations of the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the co-chairs were somewhat marginalized, although direct negotiations were not new and Aliiev and Ter-Petrosian had met several times before.³⁹⁷

Coinciding with Ilham Aliiev's (the president of Azerbaijan) coming to power, several different figures published articles about re-activating the Minsk Group mediators, resuming their visits to the region and especially re-accepting their new solutions. But no solution was implemented up to July 2009.

An Evaluation of the Minsk Group's Attempts at Bringing Peace

One of the problems faced by the OSCE at the beginning of its mediation was a lack of experience on conflict resolution as it was the first time the OSCE had acted as a mediator in an armed conflict. It is noteworthy that the OSCE specialized in what is called preventive diplomacy. The peacekeeping operations in NK were the first in OSCE history,³⁹⁸ and could thus be considered a test of competence in mediation for them. The OSCE did not know which policy should be adopted towards the issue of the collapse of the USSR and its aftermath.

Thus, the organizational interests of the OSCE damaged the settlement process of the conflict. It should be explained that the OSCE was organized as a political structure, aiming at confidence-building between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) or, in other words, the West and the East. They had a positive function until the collapse of the USSR, but after that, following the abolition of the WTO, they sought to justify their existence by taking on the mediating role in the NK conflict, so simply having

responsibility was important to them, even though their action was ill thought out. Hence, the raft of proposals and plans were counterproductive. In fact, in the early years, the Minsk Group members believed there was no difference between the essence of problem-solving and its formalities.

For that reason, the Minsk Group wasted important resources on preliminaries and marginal issues. For example, for a few months, all negotiations centred on how the Karabakh Armenian representatives should participate in the peace negotiations, where the OSCE forces should be deployed in the region and where they should be stationed, either along the Armenia-Azerbaijan borders or the NK–Azerbaijan frontiers. It is interesting to note that some of these preliminaries were never resolved during the negotiations, including the question of peacekeeping, which was further complicated as Russia had consistently made it clear that it preferred a Russian-only peacekeeping force, and the other OSCE members rejected it.

Even though there were no peacekeepers, the ceasefire had not been broken in the past years.³⁹⁹ An eleven-member international conference was to be held to settle the Karabakh problem, as mentioned in the resolution delivered at the ministerial summit, dated 24 March 1992. In fact, the NK situation was on the agenda of the Minsk Group.⁴⁰⁰ They even designated July 1992 as the date for holding the conference, but the prolongation of military operations and the fall of Shusha and then Lachin scotched the idea. The Lachin corridor connects NK to Armenia and has wider geopolitical and security importance for both sides.⁴⁰¹

This had an adverse impact on the programme as the Azeris specified the withdrawal of Armenia from Shusha and Lachin, as a pre-condition for participating in the conference.⁴⁰² This caused the meeting to be cancelled because one party was absent. After a lengthy debate, it was decided to hold a pre-conference session to solve the problem of Shusha and Lachin. The OSCE sought to solve this difficulty in a few days, and a few months later to hold the peace conference itself. But in hindsight it is fair to say that this problem could not be solved while Armenia refused to withdraw from Shusha and Lachin.

Thus, this early period was characterized by the OSCE's unrealistic views and their false expectations, as evidenced by this first conference. Interestingly, it was held in Rome. As time passed, the continuation of military operations not only prevented the question of Shusha and Lachin from being solved, but the capturing of a new region at that moment by the Armenians led to further postponements. Thus, each time the OSCE arranged a timetable to fix a date for the conference it was obliged to settle the problem of the new occupied region beforehand. After preparing many timetables and having others in the pipeline, they reached the conclusion that holding the meeting was impossible, as they believed the time was not right for a peace conference. The members who chaired the peace process were known as the Minsk Group, and after the suspension of these sessions, it was renamed the Minsk process.

This process had another impact. The OSCE`s goal was to meet in order to resolve the NK situation and after the failure to hold the conference, the “step-by-step approach” was automatically accepted.⁴⁰³

Another important factor in the evolving function of the Minsk Group was related to Russia's role regarding this group. The Russian stance towards the CSCE-OSCE and its relations with it influenced the Minsk Group's functions. As mentioned earlier, the quality of the CSCE mediation in comparison with other states dates back to 1992, when the Russians had no intention of interfering in the region. But before the CSCE could take effective steps to settle the conflict (in the second half of 1992), the Russians changed their foreign policy and decided to revive their interests in the region. As a result, the Kremlin took an active part in the NK conflict and this diminished the CSCE influence during this period.

In January 1997, France and then the United States became permanent co-chairs of the Minsk Group, together with Russia. This period can be said to have lasted until the end of 1997, when Ter-Petrossian the Armenian president was deposed. This signalled the victory of the hardliners over the pragmatists in Armenia, and the rejection by Armenia of the OSCE`s step-by-step plan.⁴⁰⁴

The Minsk Group has continued its efforts to resume negotiations and present new peace plans. The “Common State” in November 1998 was one such proposed solution, among others but it was not successful.

An assessment of the Minsk Group's attempts indicates that it was not successful in the settlement of the NK conflict and all attempts at a resolution from 1994 until now have reached a deadlock. Some of the effective factors and reasons for the failure of the Minsk process have been pointed out above. However, some individuals and scholars believe that the Minsk Group of the OSCE could become a good mediator and be successful.

Regarding the failure of the OSCE, Mr. J. Libaridian, senior advisor to the ex-president of Armenia and also the head of Armenian negotiators with Azerbaijan, believes that the framework and policies adopted by the OSCE so as to become involved in the problem were irregular from the beginning. Moreover, those persons who were commissioned by this organization had no background knowledge of this region or the factors causing conflict between the parties and only a few members had general experience in mediation. According to him, Russia was the only state that had a direct appreciation of the differences and had spent time in acquiring a deep understanding of the issue.⁴⁰⁵

We can draw a conclusion from his assertions that the arrangements of the Minsk Group members in general, and the co-chairs, were not suitable for this purpose.

On the one hand, the complex and contrary interests of the three states, namely Russia, France and the United States made it very difficult to reach

an agreement and consensus regarding a solution to the conflict. In fact, this subject convinced the Minsk Group to forgo presenting solutions and entrust the problem to the parties themselves and ask the Presidents to solve their own disputes.⁴⁰⁶ The first meeting with the support of the US administration was held in April 1999 in Washington DC.

Minsk Group Solutions

Since it was formed, the OSCE Minsk Group has drafted and presented three solutions to the conflict. Furthermore the proposal that was presented in Madrid in 2007 was very close to one of the three solutions known as the Step-by-Step plan. However, each solution was rejected by at least one or all three parties in the dispute. We now discuss the Minsk Group proposals and review the positions of each party towards each of the proposals.

The Package solution

The “Package Approach” was proposed to the parties in May 1997. This time, after considering different aspects of the conflict, the Minsk Group co-chairs simultaneously submitted complete peace plans because while some issues were totally independent of each other, others were enmeshed. This peace plan included:

- Complete autonomy for Karabakh within the framework of the Azerbaijan Republic.
- Withdrawal of all Armenian forces from the occupied regions

- Returning of the homeless and refugees to their own homes
- Deployment of the OSCE peacekeeping forces in the buffer zone
- Renting Lachin by Karabakh from Azerbaijan
- Lifting the economic blockade.⁴⁰⁷

This package covered all the issues including the final status of NK.

The most important aspect of this peace plan was that Karabakh had been presumed to be within the framework of Azerbaijani territorial integrity. Naturally, the Karabakhis would have some representatives in the Azerbaijani parliament and they would participate in the presidential elections.⁴⁰⁸ This solution, which had insisted on the position of NK within Azerbaijani territory above all else, was rejected by Armenia and Karabakh and it was not resolved because no agreement was struck over Karabakh's status.

According to some authorities like Vladimir Kazimirov (the first Russian President's special envoy in the NK conflict), the Package Approach variant seemed to be more effective for the settlement of such a complicated issue when compared with other options. This is why Armenia expected all the disputed problems to be resolved in one meeting in which the subject of Karabakhi independence or annexation to Armenia would be finalized. But since Azerbaijan would not accept autonomy, the Package Approach would simply hold up the negotiations and bring the peace process to a standstill.

According to Kazimirov, the agreements must necessarily start from the less pertinent issues which pave the way to a breakthrough in the negotiations.⁴⁰⁹

Regardless of the truth or otherwise of this viewpoint, what seemed to be the basic problem was defining the political and legal status of NK and it is clear that if the parties were ready to compromise, the Package Approach would certainly be negotiable. The main obstacle that prevented the proposed solutions from being effective were the parties in the conflict themselves. Naturally, if they were ready to reach a mutual compromise, the settlement of the conflict would be possible through this plan too.

For a short time from 1998 onwards, Armenia insisted on the Package Approach and Azerbaijan in contrast, on the Step-by-Step approach, detailed below. Acceptance of the latter proposal, as the principle of the peace talks led in the end to the abdication of Ter-Petrossian. There was a similar body of opinion in Azerbaijan concerning the Package Approach. Ilham Aliyev declared many times that under no circumstances would he agree to accept such a compromise, certainly not in advance of the 2008 elections.⁴¹⁰

In June 2004, after a number of meetings between both Foreign Ministers and Minsk Group co-chairs, Yuri Merzlyakov, the Russian chair, declared that the Minsk Group mediators were trying to connect all the complex problems and unsolved differences between the parties. The American former representative also suggested that the package approach was the basis for a

probable proposal of the Minsk Group in the future, which would be drawn up in accordance with the Paris and Key West principles.⁴¹¹

In this respect, in his interview with “Radio Liberty”, in June 2004 Elmar Mammadyarov, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, described his negotiations with his Armenian counterpart, which were based on Armenia’s insistence on the Package Approach whilst Azerbaijan declared itself in favour of the Step-by-Step solution.

“Thus, in the new process, we will select the most acceptable options from these two approaches and then arrange them in a separate plan so as to achieve a new solution by mutual consent in the future.”⁴¹²

The Step-by-Step solution

The Step-by-Step peace plan was proposed to the two parties by the Minsk Group co-chairs in December 1997. This plan was based on achieving a solution through agreement on details and moving gradually towards an understanding of the general issues. Ambassador, V. Kazimirov, as a committed supporter of the Step-by-Step solution, thought that the way to resolve the quarrel was through multiple small steps. “Of course, by ‘stages’ we do not mean to begin with meeting the demands of only one of the sides (even if this is quite lawful), and only then considering the problems concerning the other side.

At each stage, small packages must be made up so that all sides are satisfied. To begin with, let these not be the main issues. Surely, over the course of a few years, a number of problems can be settled, creating a positive dynamic and a more favourable atmosphere, rather than being stuck in deadlock, with people being driven to despair and forced to abandon the country.”⁴¹³

The issues related to Karabakh were divided into two categories. The first was grouped under "military-technical" issues or "the removal of the consequences of the war", and included the end of the blockades, the return of occupied territories on both sides, the repatriation of displaced people and refugees from both sides, measures to strengthen the ceasefire and other humanitarian issues, such as hostages and prisoners of war. The second category referred to the question of the future status of NK. The Step-by-Step Approach related to a methodology of first negotiating one set of problems and implementing its solutions, and then tackling the second category of issues.⁴¹⁴

It was proposed that the Armenian forces should withdraw from the Azerbaijani territories around NK (except the Lachin corridor), then in the next step, the grounds would be prepared for the refugees to return to their homes. But the legal and political identity of NK would be deferred to the future.

This approach had some shortcomings, because the outlook for answering some problems would remain ambiguous and unresolved; for instance, how could the subject of the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Azeri Lachin corridor be resolved? Hence, this plan didn't make it beyond the paper it was written on.

It should be mentioned that this approach was rejected at the first stage by the NK Proclaimed Government.⁴¹⁵ Ter-Petrossian resigned under pressure from powerful forces in his own cabinet who opposed his acceptance of the Minsk Group co-chairmen's September 1997 draft proposal for the resolution of the conflict.⁴¹⁶ Robert Kocharian, the Karabakhi successor to Levon Ter-Petrossian declared that he supported the Package Approach. He believed that "any process breaking the status quo that does not guarantee the final settlement of the conflict and poses the risk of re-igniting military operations because these processes destroy the temporary balance formed since the ceasefire was established."⁴¹⁷

However, the remarks of Kocharian and other Armenian authorities, in April 2005, indicated that the mediators' could have drawn the Armenians' attention to this solution by presenting some international guarantees.⁴¹⁸

Of course, the mere agreement of the Armenian President with this solution should not be considered as the end of the conflict. As mentioned before, as soon as ex-President Ter-Petrossian agreed with this plan, the power triangle (the Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, and the Defence Minister) put him

under pressure and he was forced to resign. In 2005 when Kocharian adopted a fresh position, the opposition seriously talked about starting a revolution and ousting him in the near future.⁴¹⁹

The Common State solution

OSCE efforts were not active from the end of 1997 to the first few months of 1998 because of a number of internal developments in Armenia which led to his opposition to the Step-by-Step Approach and other matters. Ter-Petrossian resigned as Armenia's president on 3rd February 1998 and Kochurian, who contributed to his resignation, replaced him on 3rd March 1998. He was president of NK from 1994 to 1997 and Prime Minister of Armenia from 1997 to 1998. In 1998, after the Minsk Group co-chairs proposed a new plan named the Common State, approach, they resumed their mediating efforts.

It was, in fact, an attempt to find an "unconventional" solution, which would, as far as possible, formally combine the main demands: Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and NK's self-determination. The most important items of this alternative approach were as follows:

- NK is a state and a territorial formation. Together with the Azerbaijan Republic, it constitutes a single state within its internationally-recognized borders.

- The NK Constitution and laws are effective on NK territory. The laws of the Azerbaijan Republic are effective on NK territory only if they do not run counter to the Constitution and the laws of the latter.
- NK will be entitled to have direct external relations with foreign states in the spheres of economics, trade, science, education and culture.
- NK will have a National Guard and police force but they can not act outside of NK borders.
- The army, security forces and the police of the Azerbaijan Republic will have no right to enter NK territory without the consent of the NK authorities.⁴²⁰

Based on these items, this plan proposes that Karabakh would be an independent *de facto* state and there would be no hierarchical relation between Azerbaijan and Karabakh. Furthermore, none of the authorities of the “Common State” would unilaterally be allowed to deny any mutually-accepted provisions.⁴²¹ According to the first item of the “Common State Plan”, a common commission consists of Karabakhi and Azeri representatives who will mutually administer it.⁴²² It can be seen from these items that this plan proposes horizontal relations between Azerbaijan and NK. This was rejected by the Azeri side, but Yerevan and Stepanakert accepted it.

It is necessary to mention that the “Common State Approach” raised many ambiguities and questions for Yerevan, Stepanakert and Baku. The concept and meaning of the “Common State” was not clear to them and issues such as which state would it be in, who the President would be and what the state

would be called, were left unclear. But it was predicted that the NK Proclaimed Republic and the Republic of Azerbaijan would enjoy equal rights and Stepanakert would not be under the direct jurisdiction of Baku and a horizontal relationship would be established between them.

By "the state", a unitarian form of nation is meant. But, apart from the above-mentioned ambiguity, what seems most interesting was the lack of unity among the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group concerning the exact name of this approach. So, they called it the "allied state", "common government". It is obvious that there is an essential difference in the meaning of "common" and "allied" when, within the framework of which there might be either a limited or a "broad" autonomy. And if this was all that was offered to the conflicting sides by the co-chairmen of the OSCE's Minsk Group, then it should be admitted, that their offer was in no way novel. But when it comes to the second - the "joint state"- two forms of state configuration are being described at once: a federation and a confederation. If it was intended that the Karabakh Armenians would become a member of the federation, the co-chairmen should have defined which function would be offered to NK as a member of this imaginary federation.

A study of the text of the proposals of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group from November to December 1997, gives us grounds for think that the main intention was to expand ordinary notions about interrelations between a "federal centre" and a "subject of the federation". For instance, it was presumed that NK, while returning to the legal sovereignty of Azerbaijan,

would nonetheless retain all the external attributes of independent statehood: the institutions of the presidency, parliament, government, constitution, court system, army (in the form of a national guard), the police, a state emblem, national anthem, flag, and so on. But, as to NK maintaining its communication links with the outside world, the following was offered: the Azerbaijan Republic "rents out" to the OSCE the zone of the Lachin humanitarian corridor and the OSCE establishes its control over it "in collaboration and interaction" with the leadership of NK by using manpower officially provided by Stepanakert, working jointly with observers from the OSCE. NK would be deprived of the possibility of carrying out an independent foreign policy and having independent banking and financial operations. But at the same time, this territory was declared to be a free economic zone with unlimited use of any foreign currency.

The peace proposals of the Minsk Group co-chairmen enable us to conclude that, though the terminology speaks of preserving Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as a single state, the thrust of the international intermediaries' proposals was to set a course towards the formation of a union of states between Azerbaijan and NKR, that is to say, a confederation and an asymmetric one at that.

According to a commentary by Oskaniyan, the then Armenian foreign minister, the term "Common State" means "more than autonomy and less than independence". In April 1998, when Kocharian had just become President, he declared in Moscow that Armenia accepted a compromise

concerning the NK conflict and that it was forgoing the independence of the NKR.⁴²³

Briefly, the Republic of Armenia and the NKR stated that they were ready to accept this plan, as the basic principle for the resumption of the peace negotiations. But the Azerbaijan Republic rejected it with respect to its national interests, based on the standards of international law, because, as Vafa Guluzade, the State Advisor of the Azerbaijani President, commented (in the autumn of 1996), "a confederation means independent states."⁴²⁴ Besides, the Baku authorities rejected outright the possibility of establishing horizontal relations with NK. On 24th June 1998, during a meeting with the European Parliamentary Committee, Heydar Aliiev addressed the deputy, Karin Jones, and insisted that under no circumstances was there any possibility of establishing confederal relations between Azerbaijan and NK and this was not negotiable.⁴²⁵

Moreover, after the meetings between both Presidents in Paris and Key West which put forward proposals that were known as the "Paris principles", the "common state" approach was nullified in practice. As already mentioned, according to the Paris principles, NK would nominally remain within the framework of Azerbaijan without having vertical relations or hierarchy and, in the meantime, it would establish direct links with Armenia through the Lachin corridor. In a word, according to the Paris principles, NK would achieve independence through a *de facto* not a *de jure* government.⁴²⁶

As can be seen the proposed solutions were each fundamentally different to each other – but for a variety of reasons they were all rejected by one of the parties. What remains clear is that talks need a fresh impetus and further work to settle the differences between the two sides.

Important OSCE Summits & Resolutions

As mentioned earlier, the CSCE`s Ministerial Council undertook the mediation of the conflict in March 1992 and decided to prepare the ground for the settlement of the dispute by holding a conference in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. Thereafter, in December of the same year, the members of the CSCE elected Han Mario Raffaelli, as the chairman of the CSCE in NK affairs and called for the exerting of ceaseless efforts by the Minsk Group to advance the peace process.⁴²⁷

In September 1993, the Minsk Group developed an “adjusted timetable of urgent steps to render inoperative Security Council Resolution 822”. But the ousting of the Azeri president, Elchibey, in June and the seizure of the Azeri town of Aghdam by the Armenian forces of NK in July of that year created an entirely new situation, leading to the loss of the leadership in crisis management for the CSCE.⁴²⁸ It should be said that this new adjusted timetable for the parties to the conflict (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and NK) anticipated, among other things, the withdrawal of Karabakh forces from all recently-occupied areas of Azerbaijan.⁴²⁹

In September 1994, the end of the armed conflict paved the way for Minsk Group members to test the waters for the organizing of peacekeeping forces under the Third Act approved in the 1992 Helsinki summit. This act contained a general order regarding the operation of the CSCE peacekeeping forces.⁴³⁰

In the Budapest summit of 1994, it was decided to intensify the CSCE act concerning the NK conflict. Also some decisions were made regarding harmonization of the mediating efforts undertaken by Russia, which had been appointed as one of two co-chairmen of the Minsk Group and the OSCE. In this summit, the co-chairmen of the Minsk conference and the members of the Minsk Group were introduced. The members also welcomed the 12th May 1994 agreement of the ceasefire by the parties in dispute.

One important decision made at the summit was the sending of peacekeeping forces to the region as soon as the parties relinquished military operations. The members expressed their political will to deploy multinational peacekeeping forces, on the condition of the issuing of an appropriate resolution by the UN and the ending of the military conflict. A high-level planning group was set up in Vienna to make recommendations for arranging a possible mission to the area.

In August 1995, the OSCE chairman-in-office introduced his personal representative on the conflict to the Minsk conference. In this capacity, he was mandated to act regarding the continuation of the ceasefire and to prepare the ground for the deployment of the multinational peacekeeping

forces in the region, as well as to report all information regarding the issues relating to the NK conflict.⁴³¹

In December 1996, during the Lisbon summit, the OSCE chairman-in-office issued a very important statement concerning the principles for settling the NK problem. While notifying the members that no progress had been made in the past two years in resolving the impasse, he regretted that the efforts of the co-chairmen of the Minsk conference to reconcile the parties' views on the principles of a settlement had been unsuccessful. He then added that the three principles which should shape a settlement of the NK dispute had been recommended to the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, and these ideas were supported by all the members of the group. These three principles were as follows:

1. Territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Armenian Republic
2. Conferring the Highest Degree of Autonomous status on NK within Azerbaijan
3. Guaranteed security for NK and its entire population.⁴³²

At the end of this statement, all but one (Armenia) of the state-participants rejected it, whereas all the others supported the principles. This statement was included in the documents of the Lisbon summit and, as a result, caused a failure in Armenia's diplomacy regarding Karabakh.⁴³³

The plan did not receive a favourable response in Stepanakert. Through a declaration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of NK assessed the OSCE communication as “a flouting of law, fairness and common sense in the face of gross blackmail on the part of Azerbaijan.”⁴³⁴

In late 1996 and following the end of Finland's commission as chairman of the Minsk Group, the OSCE's chairman-in-office introduced the three states of Russia, France and the United States as the triple co-chairmen of the Minsk Group.

After making known the comments and decisions taken during the Lisbon summit, the peace process reached a temporary deadlock. In particular, in April 1997, it was made abundantly clear that the negotiations had ground to a halt.

During the month of May 1997, the co-chairmen pooled their ideas and developed a unified approach to address the problem. It embraced a comprehensive *modus operandi* with two agendas. The first comprised immediate steps to end the armed conflict including, *inter alia*, troop withdrawal, deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force, return of displaced persons, establishing measures to guarantee the security of all populations, the removal of blockades and embargoes and normalization of communications throughout the region. The second agenda was to determine the status of NK that was to be approved by the Minsk conference. The co-

chairmen presented these new proposals on 31st May and 1st June 1997 in Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Baku.

The Presidents of France, Russia and the United States, during their meeting in Denver on 23rd June 1997, made a joint declaration in which they called upon the leaders of the parties in dispute to take a positive approach towards the proposals presented to them by the three co-chairmen. They pointed out that these suggestions had taken into consideration the legitimate interests and concerns of all the parties and presented an appropriate basis for achieving a mutually-acceptable agreement. On 10th October 1997, within the framework of the Council of Europe summit, a meeting took place between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, after which, a statement was issued emphasizing that Azerbaijan and Armenia were as committed as before to the peaceful settlement of the NK conflict by political means, in the first instance through negotiation.

With the acceptance of the co-chairmen's recommendations by Azerbaijan and Armenia as a basis for negotiations, during November and December 1997, the co-chairmen concentrated on obtaining the same response in NK. However, NK continued to adopt a negative position.⁴³⁵

The OSCE chairmen-in-office made a visit from 23rd to 26th November to the south Caucasus region, including the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic. During the course of his journey, he met with the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as the leadership of NK, and became

acquainted with the situation in the area of the conflict. All the parties involved agreed that the OSCE Minsk course was the only suitable framework for a continuation of the peace process. The parties expressed their firm commitment to maintaining the ceasefire. Upon the suggestion of the chairman-in-office, everyone agreed to an exchange of prisoners of war and referred to this as a positive step towards confidence-building. The chairman-in-office welcomed the vigorous activity by the co-chairs during 1998. He accordingly urged the antagonists to resume negotiations within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group without delay.⁴³⁶

At the 1999 Istanbul OSCE Summit, the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group presented a report based on the evolving situation and recent developments connected with the NK conflict and commended the efforts of both sides. The heads of state supported the dialogue and the negotiations within the OSCE. They applauded in particular the intensified dialogue between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose regular contacts had created opportunities to dynamize the process of finding a lasting and comprehensive solution to the problem. He firmly supported this dialogue and encouraged its continuation.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, a decision was made concerning the opening of the OSCE Personal Reprehensive Office in Yerevan and Baku.

In general, regarding the effects of the Istanbul declaration, it should be mentioned that it would appear that this declaration was to the benefit of Armenia, since, on returning from Istanbul; Robert Kocharian stated

cheerfully in Yerevan airport that the Istanbul meeting removed entirely the negative consequences of the Lisbon meeting of 1996.⁴³⁸

Following the afore-mentioned provisions in the declaration of the OSCE Istanbul meeting in November 1999, the co-chairmen continued convening high-level direct negotiations between Baku and Yerevan and took a step forward, aiming at the creation of a basis to resume the negotiations within the framework of the Minsk Group. In other words, the mediators suggested that Armenia and Azerbaijan should resolve their differences by themselves (under the Minsk Group). This time, the peace process was followed at Presidential / Foreign Minister level through direct and secret meetings within the framework of the Minsk Group.⁴³⁹

In 2000, the co-chairmen based their activities on establishing relations with international organizations and communities. In particular, they cooperated with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross and as a result, some delegations were dispatched to the region and some issues were resolved like the exchange of prisoners of war. In that year, the co-chairmen submitted their report, stating the conditions and the outlook for the settlement of the conflict to the Political Deputy of the UN Secretary General. They also intensified their activities to facilitate the peace process after holding the OSCE Ministerial Council in November 2000. During the months of December, May, June and November they visited the region four times. They also held many meetings, *inter alia* a consultative committee attended by regional experts in June and October.

These finally led to the meeting of the presidents in Paris, in July 2001 and the submitting of a solution in accordance with the Paris principles.

Several factors provoked a deadlock in the peace talks including, on the one hand, Azerbaijan's disregard for the execution of the Paris and Key West agreements, and the remarks of its Defence Minister and different non-governmental organizations concerning the military liberation of Karabakh and, on the other, the declaration of Velayat Guliev, the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister who on 7th March 2002 deemed that the OSCE efforts had been unsuccessful.⁴⁴⁰ Since a stalemate in the peace process could impact on the ceasefire, the mutual confidence and the mediating process of the Minsk Group, their representatives paid a visit to the region in March 2002 and presented their new proposals to the political leaders of both sides, the content of which were not made public.⁴⁴¹

The Group also offered a new structure for the negotiations, which would be complementary to the presidents' sessions. In the new set-up, the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents' special envoys were to be commissioned to continue the peace talks in the Minsk process. Both presidents appointed the deputies of their Foreign Ministers to perform the new role.⁴⁴²

During recent years the co-chairs have been very active in dispatching high-ranking delegations to the region, *inter alia* the leaders and foreign ministers of their countries and in convening conferences with the participation of the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan.

From 1998 to November 2004, the Presidents and high-ranking officials of the opposing parties were directly entrusted to resolve the dispute and they conducted backstage negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group. The Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia have had 21 direct discussions during the past few years. After the death of Heydar Aliev in December 2003, his son Ilham Aliev met with his Armenian counterpart three times from 1999 to 2002. The Presidents had met on more than 20 occasions with no results achieved. As far as the content and results are concerned, maybe the most important presidential meetings were those in Paris and Key West. During the four-day peace negotiations dated 3rd -7th April 2001 in Florida, through the participation of Heydar Aliev and Kocharian and under the supervision of the three representatives of the Minsk Group, the co-chairs were witnesses to substantial progress in the peace negotiations. It is noteworthy that following the Key West talks, each of the Presidents had a meeting with President Bush in the White House, during which, Bush promised to provide extensive economic assistance if the conflict was resolved.⁴⁴³ In Florida, approval was also given to invite Iran to take part in the mediating process, but Iran gave a cold response, as it was concerned that no serious role had been given to Iran before.⁴⁴⁴

The published contents of the negotiations, called the Paris and Key West Principles (the last negotiations between Kocharian and Aliev in April 2001) are as follows:

- Withdrawal of Armenian forces from six out of seven occupied Azerbaijani territories; the seventh region is the Lachin corridor, connecting Armenia to Karabakh.
- Karabakh and Lachin will achieve autonomy *de facto*, while they will remain within the Azerbaijani territory, *de jure*.
- An international corridor guarded by international forces will link Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan across Armenian soil.⁴⁴⁵

Briefly, in recent years and through the OSCE summits and Ministerial councils, including the Oslo, Vienna, Bucharest, Porto and Maastricht meetings, the Minsk group co-chairmen have presented reports stating their measures and efforts in the period between each meeting. Some of these gatherings have ended by expressing some generalities about the peace process. For example, by stressing “the direct negotiations between the Presidents within the Minsk Group”, the OSCE state-participants supported the co-chairs’ efforts and also encouraged the conflicting parties to find a peaceful resolution. Meanwhile, developments in the international sphere had also influenced attitudes towards discussing the NK conflict in European meetings, as it had lost its importance and priority or on occasions had been dropped as an agenda item from meetings, after the events of September 11th 2001.

In early 2004, international mediators, operating under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, took action to reinvigorate the peace process by facilitating several top-level meetings between Armenian and Azerbaijani

officials. In late April 2004, for instance, the Armenian president Robert Kocharian met with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Ilham Aliev, in Warsaw, and on 12th-13th May, the Foreign Minister's of the two countries were scheduled to meet on the sidelines of the European Council.⁴⁴⁶

Ilham Aliev and his Armenian counterpart met three times in Prague, Warsaw and Astana but the details and results of their talks have not been published. However, according to some sources, it seems they reached an agreement in the Astana meeting regarding a framework for the settlement of the conflict. This framework, which had been designed by the Minsk Group, summed up the results of the four meetings between the Foreign Ministers of both sides during the so-called Prague process. The Minsk Group presented this framework to the Presidents in Astana.

It is worth mentioning that during the December 2004 meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Sofia, 55 OSCE state-participants reached a consensus on this framework for the NK conflict and urged Presidents Aliev and Kocharian to take the "framework reached in Astana" into account and to move forward by basing their decisions on it.⁴⁴⁷ Following this meeting, the OSCE issued a statement and commended the progress achieved in the settlement of NK conflict in 2004 and welcomed the creation of the so-called "Prague Process."⁴⁴⁸

But in Yerevan, some officials involved in the process said that they saw no sign of an immediate breakthrough. One Armenian diplomat commented "The

framework of the agreements elaborated in Astana is very vague and there is still a lot of work to do." Even if the two reached an agreement on the final outline for a settlement deal, Kocharian and Aliev would then face the task of persuading their countries to agree to the plan. Given the problems with political stability that both leaders faced, the task was unlikely to be quickly accomplished.⁴⁴⁹

In 2006, the meetings of the two Presidents, Robert Kocharian of Armenia and Elham Aliev of Azerbaijan (held in Ramboulet in February, Bucharest in June and Minsk in November) failed to result in any substantial agreement.

On November 29th 2007 a set of proposals which were developed in 2005 and 2006 by the OSCE following meetings between senior Azerbaijani and Armenian officials were presented by US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner to the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Madrid.

Following the meetings that took place in Madrid, the OSCE released a statement that said: "It was noted that over the last three years of talks the two sides have significantly narrowed their differences through the mediation of the Co-Chair countries and that only a few differences remain to be settled. As noted by the representatives of the three Co-Chair countries, the joint proposal that was transmitted today to the party's offered just and constructive solutions to these last remaining differences. The parties to the

conflict were strongly urged to bring to a close the current stage of negotiations by endorsing the proposed Basic Principles and commencing as soon as possible to draft a comprehensive Peace Agreement."⁴⁵⁰

The basic proposals were as follows:

- 1.The withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Azerbaijani regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh;
- 2.The resettlement of these regions with Azerbaijani refugees;
- 3.The return of Azerbaijani refugees to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh itself;
- 4.The provision of an overland link connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia through the Lachin corridor;
- 5.The deployment of peace-keeping forces across the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh;
- 6.The demilitarization of the territories that had been returned to Azerbaijan;
- 7.The lifting of the blockade of Armenia's and Karabakh's external communications, and reopening of the Armenian-Turkish border;
- 8.The definition of an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh Republic;
- 9.The conduct of a referendum on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh at some undefined, future date;
10. Provision of international financial aid for the restoration of the conflict zone.⁴⁵¹

Azerbaijan reaction to this proposal was: "If an agreement is reached on any principle of the NK conflict settlement, it must be made public," Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov said. The minister underlined that

public diplomacy may have a positive influence on the process only after peace is achieved. "During a meeting in Madrid, the sides were handed a new package of proposals on conflict resolution. We are working on the document. Though there are no new proposals, it offers some new features. We think the document admissible but have some observations," he said.⁴⁵²

In Prague on 8th May 2009, after the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister (Memmedov) said: "I can not say that we have achieved any significant progress. Complex issues were discussed at the meeting in Prague. Unfortunately, the Armenian side once again did not show a constructive attitude. Azerbaijan wants Armenian troops to withdraw from the occupied territories as soon as possible."⁴⁵³

Furthermore, in a news conference in June 2009, Memmedov indicated that the NK conflict must be resolved on terms of the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories: "We are moving, albeit slowly, and we must move forward step by step, Let the Armenian side be confident that Baku will not allow preserving the current situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh in future" Mammadyarov said.⁴⁵⁴

Events in Georgia showed that any challenge should be faced on the basis of talks, but the President of Azerbaijan Aliyev, in a televised nationwide address on May 27th, 2009 said "there is and there can be no mechanism for Nagorno-Karabakh's secession from Azerbaijan at the negotiating table."⁴⁵⁵ The Armenian reaction to this proposal was made by President Sarkysyan:

“The Nagorno-Karabakh peace process is conducted within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, based on the ‘Madrid principles’. A resolution of the longstanding conflict is possible if Azerbaijan recognizes the right of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for self-determination, if Nagorno-Karabakh has a land border with the Republic of Armenia, and if international organizations and the leading powers of the world guarantee the security of the Nagorno-Karabakh people.”⁴⁵⁶ Sarkisian in October 2008 said at the meeting that he was ready for talks with Azerbaijan on the basis of principles worked out at negotiations in Madrid in 2007, meaning that the people of NK had gained the right to self-determination.⁴⁵⁷

Ter Petrosian reacted to this proposal; he was forced to resign in February 1988 because of accepting the Step-by-Step proposal which was proposed in September 1997. The basis of the Madrid proposal is similar to that of 1997 except for the referendum and the question of Kalbejar. Ter Petrosian had said that only the Armenian side should be clarified when the proposed referendum by the OSCE took place and he asked who would be responsible for the administration of this referendum. Ter-Petrosian also indicated that the principles were acceptable and were similar to a peace plan that he had strongly advocated while in power.⁴⁵⁸

The position of the USA in the conflict remains unchanged as they believe in a peaceful settlement of the conflict and respect for the "Madrid principles", developed by the OSCE Minsk Group. On 10 June 2009, The US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Anne Derse and Gordon Philip, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, told journalists in

Yerevan that "any mechanism of people's will must be included in the settlement of the Karabakh conflict. Any mechanism of voting, in which people express their will, should be included in the settlement process."⁴⁵⁹

Dmitry Medvedev the Russian President visited Armenia on 22nd October 2008 and in a press conference with Serge Sargsyan the Armenian President, said Russia would assist in the search of mutually acceptable solutions of the NK issue. Medvedev also said in August that the events in South Ossetia were the example. "We are ready to search for a decision. I will not comment on nuances of the talks, but we hope that a meeting of the three Presidents will be held soon and I hope it will be done in Russia."⁴⁶⁰ This is another indication that Russia is dealing with the subject separately and not under the auspices of the OSCE. The three Presidents met in Moscow in November 2008 and in St Petersburg in January 2009.

The OSCE organized a meeting in December 2008, in Helsinki with the participation of the Foreign Ministers of Russia and France, the US Deputy Secretary of State with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The outcome of this meeting was a joint statement that "the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had no military solution and it encouraged the parties of the conflict to reaffirm their commitments to a peaceful settlement."⁴⁶¹ In addition, OSCE organized a meeting between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia on the sidelines of the EU Eastern Partnership summit in Prague on 7th May 2009. At the residence of the US Ambassador in Prague the co-chair of the OSCE indicated progress.⁴⁶² However, the Azerbaijani presidential adviser on 11th May denied any progress and criticised the Minsk Group co-chairs.⁴⁶³

The French were also not hugely optimistic regarding the outcome of the meeting. In line with the Azeris dissatisfaction, the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said. "There is a lot of misunderstanding between the sides, each insists on going his own way, but we shouldn't lose heart. Presidents Aliyev and Sargsyan still have much to do."⁴⁶⁴

The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan met on the sidelines of the EU Eastern Partnership summit in Prague on the 7th of May. Following the meetings, the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair, Bryza reported, that there had been a "most substantive exchange of views between the presidents and so far differences on basic principles had been reduced."⁴⁶⁵

The co-chairs of the Minsk Group, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bryza of the United States, Ambassador Fassier of France and Ambassador Merzlyakov of Russia, visited Yerevan and Baku on May 28th and 29th 2009 and negotiated with the officials of both countries. They also took part in the meeting of the President of Armenia Serge Sarkysyan and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan in Saint Petersburg on 4th June 2009. The meeting of both Presidents was constructive and they agreed to continue with the negotiation process. The Foreign Ministers were tasked to continue working towards making the positions closer. This was the fifth meeting of both presidents.⁴⁶⁶

In joint statements released on 10th July 2009 on the sideline of the G8 summit in Italy, the Presidents of the US, France and Russia expressed their commitment to resolving the NK conflict on the basis of the Madrid agreement of 2007: "We, the Presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group's Co-Chair

countries... affirm our commitment to support the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan as they finalize the Basic Principles for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, We urge the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve the few differences remaining between them and finalize their agreement on these Basic Principles, which will outline a comprehensive settlement.”⁴⁶⁷

The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev, met in Moscow on Friday 18th July 2009 to discuss the conflict based on the Madrid Principles. The presidents were accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries, Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mamedyarov, the Co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group Yuri Merzlyakov, Bernard Fassier, Matthew Bryza and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk. The US Co-Chair Matthew Bryza expressed a level of frustration with the meeting by stating “I am disappointed. No document was signed, no new decision was taken.”⁴⁶⁸

As can be seen from the discussion above, there was no shortage of effort in trying to find a solution to the NK conflict. There are many reasons for this.

Reasons for the Failure of the Minsk Group

In a general sense, numerous factors have led to the Minsk group mediators being unsuccessful. These are detailed below. All of these have conspired to make the peace process fail. Over the years they have had different levels of

importance according to the geo-political reality at the time. These factors are detailed below:

1. Improper techniques being applied: The settlement of the NK conflict like any other prolonged, frozen, and complicated conflict requires two pre-conditions; first, the intention and will of both sides to somehow reach an agreement and compromise; and second, the ability and power of the mediators to use an appropriate policy of using incentives and punishments – a combination of "carrot and stick" methods to force the conflicting parties to compromise. The mediator should have power and should use his position outside the negotiations to persuade the parties to obey.

If the first pre-condition exists in a conflict, then the only problem will be suspicion and distrust between the parties. In this regard the role of "Track Two" diplomacy, which has not yet been applied, is crucial. It has been proved that traditional methods of negotiations are not appropriate for identity-based conflicts. In fact, the end of the Cold War opened up opportunities for a re-examination of international relations. Fortunately, this led to substantial research in conflict resolution and it is clear that without a properly designed process, the negotiation will never have a sustainable outcome. Thus, by building trust between the conflicting parties, the mediators can establish peace through direct negotiations and/or by presenting their own solution. Of course, in either case, no

positive result will be achieved unless political pressure is exerted to some degree and political guarantees are granted to both parties.

A third party should be able to engage the trust of both sides and interpret the motives of both parties towards each other. In this intense conflict, a trust-building mechanism has not been put in place. Good mediators should possess problem-solving skills so as to enable the different parties to diagnose their key problems. Developing appropriate proposals for the resolution of this type of conflict is only possible with a combination of both official and unofficial intervention. But, none of the above-mentioned pre-conditions exist in the NK conflict. In other words, neither party shows any serious inclination for compromise and peace, nor do the mediators have the ability to exert the “carrot and stick” policy.

During the years immediately following the formation of the Minsk group, some small states became members who had neither the recognition of the Caucasus region nor interests therein, so they had no serious motivation or interest in solving the conflict, The CSCE has an organizational structure where all member states are equal, and where no great-power vetoes exist.⁴⁶⁹ It is ‘too large and too low level for serious negotiation, [having] no way of guaranteeing that the much larger CSCE itself would either agree or actually produce a peacekeeping force’.⁴⁷⁰

2. A lack of capacity and interest amongst the Minsk Group: Therefore, in the early stages, when solving the conflict would have been very simple,

these states lost the opportunity to do so. This caused the peace process to be prolonged and it seems that the traditional approach has made the conflict more protracted.

A lack of strong institutions and experience in conflict resolution should thus be considered. The CSCE and then the OSCE had no previous experience in mediating to settle a conflict and establish peace. In fact, the NK conflict was their first such case of mediation. Therefore this organization should not be blamed entirely because it was the first dispute in which the OSCE had been involved.

3. The Minsk Group mediators had no stable and codified strategy to solve the NK conflict. Also, their mediation was based on traditional methods of conflict settlement, which on their own were unsuccessful.
4. The Minsk Group mediators had no understanding of the roots, the historical causes or the social-psychological aspects of the NK conflict, such as the insecurity, hatred and traditional hostility in the minds of the Armenian and Azeri nations, the deep historical disagreements and far-reaching psychological influence over the public and the specific opinions of the Azerbaijani and Armenian states. Generally, the most important reason for the failure of the mediators was that they were far from the battle zone. The most obvious example of their ignorance of the roots of the dispute, and the history and culture of the tribes of the region, was based on the misconception whereby they thought they could lead the

conflicting parties to compromise and peace. They were unaware of the fact that this conflict was not rooted in economic interests but was a disagreement over shared values and feelings. Even in recent years, the Minsk group has been unable to understand such important public feelings and tendencies.

5. While mediating, the Minsk Group co-chairmen were in contact and negotiated solely with the political leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia. They forgot to involve the opposition - influential anti-government organizations, figures and movements - and generally public opinion. Whereas, no peace accord can guarantee the permanent stability of the region without the consent and support of these elements, it is clear that convincing the people and gaining their support for the method of settling the conflict, is the most important principle for ensuring a stable peace as well as internal and regional stability.

In this respect, the Minsk Group had neglected to establish any relations with the different influential movements in either of the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is interesting that the offering of proposals to the authorities of both states causes nothing but pessimism among the different parties and movements.

It should be mentioned that the fall of the government of Terpetrossian was in fact brought about by the failure of the mediators to establish coordination and relations with the political parties and groups of the

republic of Armenia. Without doubt, this issue had the most negative effect on the peace process. Problem-solving workshops to bring together the representatives of the disputing parties to unofficially explore possible uncommitted solutions to the conflict could have been the best approach for examining the options. Unfortunately, in spite of this useful technique invented by John Burton at University College, London, which in a 1965 workshop enabled the settlement of a dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia, was never applied by the OSCE in this conflict.

6. A lack of coordination and the presence of opposing viewpoints among the regional goals and interests of the influential powers in the region, particularly between two members of the Minsk Group - Russia, and the United States. In such a situation, each of these countries preferred their own foreign policy to the settlement of the dispute, and viewed the solving of the conflict through the prism of its own interests. It is logical that finding a solution that simultaneously provides strategic and geo-political benefits to both sides has thus far been an impossible event.

It is quite evident that the rivalry amongst near and distant powers, the United States at the head, was aimed at filling the power vacuum in the Caucasus region. Because of this rivalry the status of the region and the proportion of forces stationed there had not been defined. Thus, the settlement of the NK conflict depends on the result of this competition and remains in abeyance as before. So too, we can say that the NK conflict has been a pretext for stabilizing the area, providing for regional interests

and for adjusting the behavior of the conflicting parties in their relations with these powers.

It is natural for the co-chairmen to bear in mind the geo-political benefits of their respective countries while finding a solution to the conflict, as each country tries to fulfil its own regional and geo-political programme in the region. Therefore, as long as they have not achieved these interests and goals, it is logical that they should have no intention of settling the conflict. Thus, it can be said that during the past years, the mediators have tried to preserve the *status quo* instead of making efforts to heal the divisions.

7. The Minsk Group members did not have an impartial view of the NK peace process. The mediator must be impartial as it is an important principle of mediation.
8. There were some imperfections in the OSCE decision-making process - a process which is based on consensus. In this process, a negative vote cast by either party causes the decision to become null and void. This is certainly a very weak point that hinders the Minsk Group members from carrying out their duties.
9. The frequent changes in the OSCE leadership and members of the Minsk Group, as well as a short period of service for the latter group's co-chairmen. It is interesting that in some cases, the chairman in office and the representatives did not have enough time to study and grasp such

notions as the origins and historical roots of the conflict, the stances of the opposing sides and the process of any developments. In this respect, the trips and meetings of these officials were merely ceremonial and symbolic.

Also, in many cases when one of the co-chairmen was ousted from his office, his position remained vacant for a long time. It is clear that such issues would have disrupted the process of decision-making and would have finally led to the failure of the mediators.

10. The Minsk Group mediators followed traditional, diffuse and unstructured methods, without any overarching strategy and without paying attention to the internal factors of the conflict. Thus, they failed to plan or implement any programme to remove these factors and facilitate the psychological grounds in the conflicted societies. It is interesting that the mediators were not even successful in addressing the external factors of the conflict.

11. Although the principles of territorial integrity and self determination are among those approved by the OSCE and are the basic policies of most European governments, the mediators - worrying perhaps that this would establish a precedent for the freedom-seeking movements of other groups and minorities - had no intention of favouring the principle of self-determination over that of territorial integrity.

Interestingly, neither did they effectively support the principle of territorial integrity in the early years, as the OSCE had never explicitly supported

Azerbaijan's territorial unity until the Lisbon Summit in 1996. Besides, after 1996, because of Armenian opposition, members of the OSCE did not adopt any particular stance to defend Azerbaijan's territorial cohesion. On the contrary, the co-chairmen's other solution - "the common state"- was diametrically opposed to the Lisbon declaration. This was while the OSCE repeatedly and simultaneously issued formal declarations concerning the need to respect and observe other countries' territorial integrity, especially with regard to Georgia.

This contradiction and violation of the accepted principles of the OSCE lowered the prestige of this organization in the eyes of the Azerbaijanis. This too is another weak point and reason for the failure of the mediators.

Generally, the OSCE principles and rules were arranged through a complex process of political bargaining drawn from Cold War realities; besides, the legal arrangements as a dynamic phenomenon had always been erased from the activities of this organization in most periods after the Cold War. This is why both parties arranged and explained their situation according to these principles and the legal regime which made their position uncompromising.

12.A lack of communication and interaction amongst the different parties.

This is a necessary condition for any resolution to a conflict, including this one. (Saunders 1999) The OSCE has not been able to do this.⁴⁷¹ Successful mediation entails what Berkovitch et al. call "containing,

enticing, and mending” (Berkovitch 1997; Touval and Zartman 2001).⁴⁷²

The mediator should be able to draw the parties to the dispute away from conflicting perceptions and actions and bring them together in a more harmonious relationship. Unfortunately the OSCE has not used this important insight. Justice and fairness is best regarded not as one of the issues in the conflict but as a term of analysis for the entire situation and therefore a basic way in which issues and grievances can be analyzed and resolved (Zartman et al. 1996).⁴⁷³

13. A poor choice of partners. Peace-keeping could have played an important role in bringing trust to this conflict but Moscow’s policy of “denying access” was applied in its diplomatic relations with the OSCE. Moscow did not hesitate to exploit every opportunity to “make trouble” and prevent consensus on important decisions to be made in this Organization. Russia had been concerned about the OSCE’s increased involvement in the management of the NK conflict because it would undermine and marginalize its role in the Caucasus.⁴⁷⁴

14. Not learning from past mistakes. Since the ineffectiveness and failure of the Minsk Group continues unchecked as before, and as it has made no evaluation of its past behaviour or how to improve the methods and structure of its mediation, it gives the impression that it has no serious desire to settle the dispute. An insistence on the fruitless methods of the past, without effective evaluation suggests that they have no intention of resolving the conflict. For instance, the Minsk Group mediators proposed

direct negotiations between the Presidents before 1996, which produced no practical results. Then, they entrusted the peace talks to junior ministers of foreign affairs and the presidents' special envoys on both sides, which also yielded no results. After a while, the Presidents, advised by the mediators, resumed direct negotiations. When these proved fruitless, the negotiations reverted to the junior ministers again, whose efforts had already proved to be futile. In such a state of affairs, it is only natural that the conflicting parties, particularly the Azerbaijanis, would be seriously dissatisfied with the conduct of the mediators.

15. International developments have diverted the attention of the mediators from the NK dispute at particular moments. The conflict was particularly affected by the events of September 11th, followed by the US and its allies' attack on Afghanistan and Iraq.

On the other hand, disagreements amongst members of the Minsk Group stalled the mediation process for a while. Moreover, the frosty relations among the co-chairmen of the respective states sometimes halted their meetings and counselling; for instance, the adverse conduct of the Minsk Group coincided with the sour relations between Russia and the United States during the Bosnia and Kosovo wars. Therefore, it follows that the interruption of the mediation process and the reaching of a deadlock in the peace process were the main reasons for the prolongation of the war and the failure of the mediators.

Rivalry between the regional powers, particularly Russia and Turkey, on the one hand, and Turkey and Iran, on the other – combined with the differences between China and Turkey and Europe and Turkey on the regional issues also contributed to the failure of the Minsk Group. In particular, Turkey's diplomacy and its pan-Turkic policies and plans for this region are in contrast with the direct interests of Iran, Russia, China, and Europe. In addition, Turkey's frosty relations with Armenia and its explicit and prejudiced support for Azerbaijan have had a great effect on the prolongation of the fighting and the failure of the Minsk group.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Minsk Group was successful in opening negotiations regarding the conflict, but despite these early successes has not yet achieved a stable ceasefire. Looking back over the previous 15 years, it can be argued that the OSCE has not been effective in conflict resolution and has not had the means or necessary instruments at its disposal to achieve this.

Although more than 15 years have passed since the OSCE Minsk group mediation, the hostile parties are still in the vulnerable position of “no war, no peace”. While the opportunities for the OSCE mediators have deteriorated and the people are tired and dejected by the prolonging of this situation, the Minsk Group co-chairmen insists on persevering with the mediation as before with the last proposal presented to the conflicting parties in 2007 in Madrid

which was similar to the 1997 Step-by-Step proposal which had been rejected by Azeri Karabakhs, who were not participating with negotiations.

According to some experts, including Alexander Alexandrian, the Manager of the Caucasus Research Centre in Moscow, such negotiations will not bring about any particular political outcome. In particular, given the unreliability of Azerbaijan towards Russia's mediation - which has been pointed out several times by Vafa Guluzade, the political advisor to three Azerbaijani presidents - the Azeri side is generally tired of and depressed about the continuation of the mediation process by the co-chairmen. Azerbaijan's mistrust of the Minsk Group is not confined to Russia. Leila Aliyev, the Azeri writer, says that people here believe that the other two Minsk co-chairs: the United States and France, are hostage to powerful domestic Armenian lobbies. Thus, the Azeris have their doubts about all three countries.⁴⁷⁵

The most important reason for the failure of the Minsk Group to resolve the NK dispute undoubtedly lies with the troika of co-chairs and their differences. Each member of the troika has its own viewpoint over the NK conflict and the way to its settlement. With respect to the power vacuum in the Caucasus after the break-up of the USSR, it is quite natural that each of the co-chairs - Russia, the United States, and France (representing Europe) - intends to fill the power vacuum. This has caused a rivalry between the United States and Russia, which has had, in its turn, a negative impact on the settlement of the conflict.

Another reason for the lack of effectiveness of the OSCE-sponsored negotiations can be found in the weakness of its conflict-resolution framework, which overestimated the attraction of the economic development arguments and underestimated the security concerns and the role of history in the shaping of a country's strategic choices. The framework constitutes a rational set of objectives and arguments, which do not reflect the lessons of the collective memory of the conflict parties.⁴⁷⁶ As Baird observed, values, as part of national identity, are at stake in the conflict of Nagorno Karabakh. Value-related conflicts are difficult to negotiate, because values cannot be compromised.⁴⁷⁷ This kind of dispute is not so prone to Western negotiating techniques, which are based primarily on a culture of rational self-interest.

Briefly, the cultural differences between the mediators and the parties involved in the conflict as well as the lack of recognition of the people, history and the background of the conflict, have caused the peace process to be persistently weakened.

Apart from the above points, one of the most important factors in the failure of the OSCE mediators was the lack of necessary and effective leverage to pressurise the belligerents. In such circumstances, it was quite natural that even in the case of establishing a coercive peace, it would not last, and we must also not be confident about the durability of a Bosnian treaty.⁴⁷⁸

It is clear that the Russian acceptance of the mission reflects a desire to oppose Europe and also to provide a greater weight to counter NATO

enlargement. The policy of Russia in the Caucasus is directly against EU and NATO expansion. The role given to Russia to co-chair the Minsk Group raises serious questions about the viability of this organization concerning the resolution to the dispute. As long as Russia holds the position of co-chair in the Minsk group, there will not be any settlement achieved by this organization

Russia views security and energy as part of its interests. In addition to Russia's, other foreign interests have been developed in the Caucasus. Since the interests of Russia, the US, Europe, Iran and Turkey are difficult to reconcile, Russia and other countries in the region benefit to a greater extent from the instability in NK. A stable peace reduces the political influence of these countries, while the continuation of the conflict justifies the continuing presence of the Russian military in Armenia.

Although this chapter has shown that traditional diplomacy has achieved little success in solving the dispute, what is required is a new approach, which uses the diplomatic process in its widest sense, including the use of Track Two diplomacy to achieve success. In fact this has been the view of some commentators and is the focus of the next few chapters.

Chapter 7: Legal Aspects of the NK Conflict

Introduction

One of the consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union following the introduction of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies in 1988, was the end of the policy of divide and rule. Under this policy NK separated from Armenia and Nakhchivan as well as from the rest of Azerbaijan. In addition, the Armenians had to cross through populated Azeri areas, whilst the Azeris did the same in Armenia. This change of circumstances caused the Armenians living in NK to demand independence or unification, and this in turn caused the NK conflict.

Although this dispute was between three different countries, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and the unrecognized Republic of NK - it was regarded by international organizations and external powers as an internal or intrastate quarrel. The conflict has lasted for more than two decades thus far, making it the longest inter-ethnic conflict in history. The NK contest represents a clash between territorial integrity on the one hand and self determination on the other.

Both the Azeris and the Armenians claim an absolute historic right to NK and have battled over it periodically for generations. Both nations also have very different ideas of the future status of NK. The right to self-determination is against the territorial integrity principle. Armenians justify their right by

indicating that as they are the majority population in NK they are the ones who should decide its future. The Azeris on the other hand believe that their territorial integrity should be respected as NK was internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan before the conflict began. The Karabakhis demand independence or unification with Armenia and international recognition, citing their right to national self-determination but Azerbaijan is ready to provide NK's population with the highest form of self-government but within the country's frontiers and maintain the right to preserve its territorial integrity. It should be mentioned that after the dissolution of the USSR, NK was ruled by Azerbaijan, according to international law.

The Armenians make up 80 per cent of the population of NK, speak a different language, practice a different religion and have a distinct culture to the local Azeris. They refer to the approved principles of the UN Charter and deem them very important as they are the basis of the development of the legal right to self-determination.

The Azerbaijani position regarding the final status is that international law recognizes the right to independence of colonial peoples and annexed territories but not of national minorities in internationally-recognized states. The Azerbaijanis also believe that international law demonstrates that, based on the provisions of the Soviet Constitution, the status of NK is defined as an autonomous *oblast* within the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and therefore has no right to self-determination and secession. They also argue that, in international law, there is a difference between the rights of a people and the

rights of minorities and they refer to the priority of territorial integrity as being manifest not only in the United Nations but also in regional resolutions, as well as Article-4 of the Helsinki Act and the Declaration of the Vienna Summit in 1993.

Article 55 of the United Nations promotes a number of goals with a view "to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations, based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination. In addition, Article 1, paragraph 1 of the international covenant on Civil and Political Rights for Economic, Social, and Cultural Development, reveals the following: "All people have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

To be able to find and facilitate a solution to this conflict, one must have an understanding of legal appraisal and the development of international law on self-determination and territorial integrity. Therefore, in this chapter, I examine some legal aspects of the NK conflict and how international law affects matters.

These legal features of the NK dispute are important from three points of view: the Soviet Constitution,, because both countries were part of the Soviet Union, the principles of the Commonwealth of Independent States covenant,

and international law. In addition to the above, the chapter explores the positions and legal definitions of each contending party.

The USSR Constitution and the Perspectives of the Conflicting Parties

On 20th February 1988, a session of the Supreme Soviet of the NK Autonomous Region (NKAR) in Stepanakert appealed to the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian, Azerbaijani and USSR governments to allow it to be joined to Armenia. The Azerbaijani government quickly rejected this request on the basis of the USSR constitution of 1977, article 78, which stipulates that "the territory of the union of republics may be altered by mutual agreement of the republics concerned, subject to ratification by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." However, on 18th July 1988, a special session of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR discussed the resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the NKAR regarding secession from Azerbaijan and incorporation into Armenia and adopted a decision confirming that NK should remain an autonomous region within Azerbaijan.⁴⁷⁹

Following the decision of the central government to reject the demand of Karabakh and incorporate it into Azerbaijan again and the creation of unrest in Karabakh, the administrative board of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decided to put Karabakh under Moscow's direct control as a racial-territorial-administration sector. This stand continued from January to November 1989, and again the autonomy of Karabakh within Azerbaijan was turned to. On 1st

December 1989, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia adopted a resolution on the unification of NK with Armenia.⁴⁸⁰

Finally, contrary to Azerbaijan's decision in 1991 to nullify NK's autonomy and its direct administration by Baku, the Karabakh Armenians held a referendum throughout the region on the subject of independence, thereby answering Azerbaijan's request. On 10th December 1991, 82 per cent of NK's population attended the balloting, of whom 99.89 per cent voted in favour of secession and independence.⁴⁸¹

Since that time, the Proclaimed Republic of NK has been effectively independent and currently exists as a self-proclaimed entity which has some of the attributes of a fully independent state, such as population, power, unique culture and so on. However, it lacks a clearly-defined territory and it is not internationally recognized by any state. Therefore, as we can see, from the very beginning the stage was set for a conflict because of completely incompatible ideas on the future status of that enclave. Armenia formally annexed Karabakh, whilst Azerbaijan officially abolished its autonomy, and Karabakh declared itself an independent republic.⁴⁸² Thereafter, each of the parties in dispute considered itself in the right and believed that its measures conformed to international law.

Substantiating the legitimacy of the December referendum which led to the declaration of independence in early 1992, the Armenian party drew attention to the 3rd December 1990 USSR law regarding "the Procedure for Solving

Issues of Secession of a Soviet Republic from the USSR”. Article 3 of this law provided the autonomous regions within the Soviet Republics with the right of independent self-determination.⁴⁸³

Several days before the official disintegration of the Soviet Union on 10th December 1991, a nationwide referendum took place in NK. This was held on the basis of the then legislation of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, a declaration of independence by the NKR was legally impossible and Karabakh was entitled to secession from Azerbaijan. According to Soviet law, if a republic seceded from the USSR, any autonomous region and fully active national group had the right to determine independently their further legal status by means of a referendum.⁴⁸⁴

Due to the fact that both sections of the divided Armenian nation were part of the USSR, they – the Armenians of Karabakh, like the Armenians of Armenia - were subject to the constitutional principle of self-determination set down in the Soviet constitution.

The NK declaration was implemented by way of a referendum and other democratic methods, acknowledged by the world community, in the presence of international observers.⁴⁸⁵

Regarding the circumstances surrounding the holding of the referendum, the Armenians believed that the central committee of the Karabakh election prepared the ground for it throughout the entire Karabakh region, even in the

areas inhabited by the Azeris. But the Azeris boycotted it while the Armenians considered it legitimate because 85 per cent of the population of the enclave were Armenians and the participation or otherwise of the Azeris had no effect on the result.⁴⁸⁶

Also, since NK became independent on 10th December 1991 while the collapse of the USSR happened on 15th December, the former was separated from both Azerbaijan and the USSR ⁴⁸⁷. Furthermore, the Karabakh Armenians argued that there were no legal grounds for the inclusion of NK in the structure of Azerbaijan, apart from a resolution of the Caucasian Bureau of the Bolshevik Party in 1921. The Azerbaijan Republic claimed that it was the successor of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic of 1918-1920. Meanwhile, NK was not a part of Azerbaijan at that time.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan maintained that the 70-year sovereignty of the Soviet Union and its legal heritage was illicit. This state stressed that handing over Karabakh to Azerbaijan during the era of the Soviet Union and forcibly keeping it within Azerbaijan was illegal. Therefore, Karabakh's persistence in vindicating its right to self-determination did not violate the Soviet Union's laws.⁴⁸⁸

But the Azerbaijani authorities saw things differently calling the Karabakhi separatists' measures unlawful and a violation of Azerbaijani territorial integrity and political sovereignty. Thus, they believed that by the time the referendum was held (10th December 1991) Azerbaijan had already become

an independent country (achieved independence on 30th August 1991), therefore this law of a troubled empire had no legal power over an independent Azerbaijan and its territory.

On the basis of Article 72 of the Soviet Union Constitution, which was ratified in 1977, all 15 Soviet Republics had the right of secession from that federation, but it was quite evident that this was merely a *pro forma* law, because in Article 75 of the Constitution, the territorial integrity of USSR had been defined.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, in the administrative hierarchy of the Soviet Socialist Republics, the autonomous territorial units were defined at three distinct levels, and the rights of each level were related to the realm of the Republic. In other words, the power to decide on the autonomous regions was different to that of the autonomous republics in the USSR constitution. Based on this law the autonomous regions had more limited power than the autonomous republics, and the regions did not have the right to separate. Furthermore, based on Articles 78-88 of the USSR Constitution, any changes in the border of the Union by an autonomous republic had to be confirmed by the Soviet Republic.

Based on the provisions of the USSR Constitution, to the Azerbaijani authorities, the former status of NK was defined as an autonomous *oblast* within the Soviet Social Republic of Azerbaijan, thus, it had no right to external self-determination, including secession. The provisions of Soviet law explicitly indicated that any kind of modification to the borders required the consent of the Azerbaijan SR (later Azerbaijan). Azerbaijan did not agree with

any change to its borders, arguing that the principle of granting autonomous status (regional or republican) to the national minorities of the former USSR did not have any logical basis and their creation was based more on political and imperialistic factors than a genuine desire for the protection of minority rights. This was because a number of other minorities who had a larger population than the Karabakh Armenians had not been granted autonomy. For example, the Azeri natives residing in Armenia and Georgia and the Armenians living in Georgia were not given independence, unlike the small population of Armenians in NK.⁴⁹⁰

Other Armenian claims as the basis for having the right of secession have been deduced from "oppression theory". The Armenians can claim the legitimatization of secession under this theory because of the discrimination of the Armenian population in NK.

In response to this claim, the Azeris firstly denied discrimination against the Armenians, and secondly, they claimed that, even if it had taken place, a claim for secession could not be legitimized according to "oppression theory". Besides, it is well-known that decision-making in the former USSR was highly centralized and local government was totally dependent on instructions from the Kremlin. They argued that the alleged discrimination against the NK Armenian population by the Azerbaijan Soviet government was groundless. Moreover, the Armenian population in NK shared a common government with the Azeri population, with a person of Armenian nationality leading it. There

were also schools which taught in the Armenian language and the level of welfare was higher than in most parts of Azerbaijan.⁴⁹¹

The Azeris also argued that the Armenians violated global peace and stability, resorting to the principle of the right of self-determination and justifying secessionism because they are planning to achieve it at the expense of Azerbaijan. Armenian scholars emphasize that NK is a special case and differs from other Armenian communities outside of Armenia as it had Autonomous Status which is the starting point for self-determination and of secession. To the Azeris, there is no legitimate difference in terms of secession between the Armenians of NK and those living in compact communities in other countries. There is no doubt that the Armenians living in NK (Azerbaijan) or in the territory of other states are national minorities and, as such, have the right to determine their status inside the states they inhabit, but they should not take measures for its break up.⁴⁹² Thus, according to the USSR constitution, the NK autonomous *oblast* does not have the right to secession. The Armenians in Azerbaijan, as a national minority, therefore have the right to self-determination in their own country which enables their free participation in the political life of Azerbaijan to pursue their own economic, social, and cultural development, establish and maintain, without discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with citizens of Armenia to whom they are related by national, religious, or linguistic ties. Self-determination however, does not necessarily mean secession, particularly by the use of force.

But the Armenians have another reason for arguing for self determination. They see secession as morally permissible given that the state refuses to end the serious injustices it is perpetrating against the seceding group. The types of state-inflicted injustices justifying secession are its violations of basic individual, civil and political rights, as well as its exploitation of one group to benefit another. Under certain highly-circumscribed conditions, the need for a group to defend itself against the threats to the survival of its members by third-party aggressors, when its own state is not protecting it, can justify secession.⁴⁹³

The Armenian community of NK has repeatedly alleged that it had little decision-making power and that it was discriminated against by the Azeri population of Azerbaijan in economic and cultural terms to the extent that its survival in a state with an Azeri majority was threatened.⁴⁹⁴

The proponents of NK independence claim that the policy of aggression, massacre, expulsion and national discrimination against the Armenian population carried out by Azerbaijan and Turkey, has led to the destruction and expulsion of about half a million Armenians from the territory of the so-called Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan.⁴⁹⁵

Also, with regard to economic discrimination, Stadelbauer claims that capital investments in NK during the last three decades of the Soviet Union were significantly lower than those in Azerbaijan.⁴⁹⁶ It is, however, not clear whether this can serve as a sufficient basis for concluding that NK was

systematically discriminated against in economic terms. Given the relative strength of Azerbaijani industry, it seems logical that most of the investments went into the oil-related industries, located along the Caspian Sea. NK was traditionally an agrarian and sheep-herding region without major industrial units. The Azeris cite authors such as Kurbanov who maintain that the Armenians in NK were not discriminated against. For example, he argues that economic differences among the nations of the Soviet Transcaucasus were insignificant.⁴⁹⁷

According to a leading Russian anthropologist, Yamskov, “the population of Nagorno Karabakh enjoys a level of social and economic development that is somewhat higher than that of the general population of Azerbaijan.”⁴⁹⁸ However, other scholars believe that there was, in fact, a difference in living standards in Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia. At the end of the Soviet Union, the gross domestic product per inhabitant in Azerbaijan was 75 per cent of the Soviet Union’s average, for Armenia it was 94 per cent.⁴⁹⁹ Therefore, the core of Armenian dissatisfaction with their economic standing in Azerbaijan may be their perception of the differences between the Armenian and Azerbaijani economic situations.

As for the argument that the culture of NK Armenians is at risk, the Azeris invoke the views of Allen Buchanan, who believes that “to prepare the grounds morally for secessionism, the culture must be really at risk.”⁵⁰⁰ It is difficult to argue that Armenian culture in NK was imperilled, especially given that 75 per cent of the Armenian population in the region was employed in the

local administration. However, there is a widespread conviction among the Armenians that the Armenians from NK were discriminated against regarding access to education and employment. Even more importantly, those from NK with a university education were not able to find appropriate work in their home region. Therefore they tended to migrate elsewhere – usually to Armenia or to Russia.

As mentioned earlier, in response to the Armenians' moral claims, the Azeris argued that even if we take the discrimination of the Armenians in NK as fact, the claims can be questioned on the grounds that it was not Azerbaijan but the Soviet Union that was discriminating against them. There had not been time for such discrimination when NK was a functional part of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Therefore, it cannot be convincingly argued that NK is or will be discriminated against by Azerbaijan.

In sum, it cannot be plausibly concluded that the Armenians in Azerbaijan were victimized by Azerbaijan, economically or culturally. The potentially seceding culture must meet minimal standards of moral decency. Taking into account the atrocities and the violations of human rights committed by both sides during the NK conflict, it could be argued that NK does not fulfil this criterion and neither does Azerbaijan. It may be concluded therefore that NK fails to fulfil any of the moral criteria for secession.

The Legal Aspects of the Conflict According to the CIS Treaty & Arguments of the Conflicting Parties

After the collapse of the USSR, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as independent entities, entered the CIS. One of the major principles of the Commonwealth Treaty is the inviolability of the borders of the constituent sovereign states: that is, territorial integrity.

However, the Armenian population in NK held a referendum, and declared the establishment of the NK Republic as an independent state and appealed to the Commonwealth for membership. This action contradicted the principles of the Treaty, which was signed by eleven sovereign republics, and was not recognized by the Commonwealth, or by any state in the world, or even the Armenian Republic.⁵⁰¹ In this respect, the Armenians of NK argue that the procedure for its independence was started before Azerbaijan, with the other republics and Karabakh left the structure of Soviet Azerbaijan before the collapse of the USSR. In those conditions, NK was a unit similar to Azerbaijan and they had the right to declare independence, just as the Azeris had earlier taken advantage of the opportunity to declare independence.⁵⁰²

The Legal Aspects of the Conflict in the Context of International Law, UN Charters, OSCE Principles & arguments of the Parties

Justifying their actions and positions, each of the conflicting parties used the articles of USSR law or the provisions of the CIS Treaty, through which they argued that their actions fully conformed to international standards and

principles. Thus, each side relied on either territorial integrity or the right of self-determination to clarify and justify their positions.

In this respect, when discussing and interpreting certain principles of international law, the Armenian authorities argue that NK independence depends on the Karabakhis' legitimate right of self-determination and whether it conforms to those standards. In particular they invoke Article 55 of the UN Charter, which mentions "peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of people". Based upon the 1970 UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 (xxv), stating that all self-identified groups with a common identity who live in a single territory have the right to make a common decision for their political future through democratic policies, free from any kind of systematic ruling. For these groups, the right of self-determination and, in some special cases, even complete independence can be achieved through autonomy within the structure of the federal government, confederation or free union.⁵⁰³

For example, during the investigation of the claims relating to East Timor, the International Court of Justice specified that the principle of self-determination was manifest in international common law and was applicable to all communities, and all countries were obliged to observe it.⁵⁰⁴

The Armenian authorities also invoke international law to substantiate the claim that Karabakhi independence is the result of their right to self-determination: the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights dated 16th

December 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, & Cultural Rights also dated 16th December 1966, the Declaration of Vienna, the executive plan approved by the Global Conference on Human Rights dated 25th June 1993, and the Declaration of the UN General Assembly on the principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

It must be explained that the 16th December 1996 decision of the United Nations (Article1, Paragraph 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights), had the following wording:

*"All people have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."*⁵⁰⁵

This principle was further developed in the Declaration of the United Nations General Assembly on the "Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations" of 24th October 1970: *"By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the charter. The establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integration with an*

*independent state or the emergence into any other political status, freely determined by a people, constitute modes of implementing the right of self-determination by that people.”*⁵⁰⁶

Therefore, the Karabakh Armenians claimed that their independence originated from their right to self-determination and it was then legitimized according to the above-mentioned principles. For this reason, it demanded to be recognized as the NK Proclaimed Republic by the international community. NK rejects any attempts to restore the *status quo ante* and the extension of the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan over it. The leadership of the NKR believes that they won a military victory and the armed forces of Azerbaijan were defeated. And this fact must be taken into account when it comes to a solution of the question of its status, because there is no historical precedent for a victor accepting the dominance of the defeated country. In this view, the relation between NK and the Republic of Azerbaijan can only be of a horizontal character with certain modifications.

On the other hand, the Azeri jurists claim that all international legal documents concerning the right of self-determination follow the article concerned with the inviolability of borders and the territorial integrity of countries. In other words, in international law and in the OSCE and UN principles, territorial integrity takes priority over the right of self-determination, and minorities are solely allowed an internal right to self-determination. Thus, Azerbaijan is ready to grant autonomy, with guarantees of security to the Armenian minority inhabiting Karabakh.⁵⁰⁷

According to the interpretation of Azeri jurists, there is a difference between the rights of "people" and the rights of "minorities" in international law. According to international norms, minorities have the right to determine their status inside the states they inhabit, but they should not take measures for its dismemberment. They are essentially Armenians of the same region, nationality and culture as those in the Republic of Armenia. Hence, they are a national minority – an “integral part”- of the society in which they live, and should be treated as such with respect to the applicable norms of international law.

Thus, the Azeris have a right to self-determination with regard to effective participation in political, social, economic, cultural, religious, and public life in a manner which is neither threatening to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan nor its sovereignty.⁵⁰⁸ Hence, the Azeris believed the referendum was neither legitimate from the perspective of the existing norms of international law nor of the USSR Constitution. The referendum was held without the consent of the government of the sovereign state of Azerbaijan and was held solely on ethnic grounds without Azeri participation, and it was even argued after clearing many Azeris from the region.

Therefore, to the international community, the ethnic basis mentioned in the principle of self-determination is not an authentic and sufficient principle for a declaration of independence. Moreover, this principle is not legitimate without

the consent of all sides in dispute, because in such a case the right of self-determination discriminates against the other side.

Thus, the measures taken by the Karabakh secessionists based on factors such as resorting to force, modifying the recognized borders of the Azerbaijan Republic and establishing the NK Republic are, in fact, a violation of international law, the principles of the OSCE, the CSCE and the UN guidelines among others. For example, the Helsinki Final Act of 1st August 1975 constitutes a framework for self-determination concerning territorial limit. Principle VIII states: *“The participating states will respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to the territorial integrity of states.”*

The commitments taken in this Document were fully reaffirmed later in the Charter of Paris (1990), the Lisbon Summit (1996) and in the Charter for European Security, adopted in the OSCE Istanbul Summit (1999). All of them argued that territorial integrity always prevails over self-determination. For instance, the Charter of Paris states that: *“In accordance with our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, we renew our pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or from acting in any other manner inconsistent with the principles or purposes of*

those documents. We recall that non-compliance with obligations under the Charter of the United Nations constitutes a violation of international law ".

The Azeris point to some UN resolutions and international procedures that verify their own views. For example the General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1514 (xv) and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, was the most important GA Resolution to associate the concepts of self-determination and decolonization, clearly stated in paragraph 6: *"Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."*⁵⁰⁹

Moreover, some believe that GA Resolution 1514 merely refers to the colonial countries,⁵¹⁰ as in 1960 the General Assembly declared that:

*"Self-determination" applies to territories that are ethnically distinct and geographically separate from the country administering them - that is colonies.*⁵¹¹ Thus, national self-determination became a synonym for Western European decolonization in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.⁵¹²

Such logic also allows for the assertion that since there are virtually no more colonies, the importance of self-determination to people is gone. However, such an interpretation was rejected, as it would endanger the universality of the principle, as stated in paragraph 1 of the GA Resolution 2625 (XXV), self-determination constitutes the fundamental right of all peoples. Nevertheless,

self-determination is dictated by territorial integrity, even in this document.

Paragraph 7 of this resolution states:

*“Nothing in the foregoing paragraph shall be construed as an authorizing or encouraging any action, which would dismember or impair, totally or in part the territorial integrity or political union of sovereign.”*⁵¹³

In addition to the provisions mentioned above regarding territorial integrity and imposing limits on self-determination, it should also be noted that not every group of people has the right to self-determination. In absolutely all the legal documents mentioned above, this right is granted only to minorities who have been under colonies - not for internal minorities as such, the nature and character of the right to self-determination is at the core of tensions. Minorities based on common national, ethnic, linguistic rights have no right to determine their political status.

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates:

*“In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”*⁵¹⁴

No right to self-determination is granted to minorities under the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities adopted by GA Resolution 47/135 (Dec

18th 1992) either.⁵¹⁵ Article 2 (1) of this declaration gives a slightly more precise definition of the rights of minorities: “*Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities (hereinafter minorities), have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.*”

There is no mention of self-determination in this document. Moreover, Article 8, paragraph 4, of this declaration stresses: “*Nothing in the present Declaration may be construed as permitting any activity contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.*”

The Azerbaijanis believe that the importance given to territorial integrity is evident not only in UN documents but also in regional resolutions and documents. Article 4 of the Helsinki Final Act stressed that this principle was very important. Also, in the Declaration of Vienna summit, 1993, the authorities of the members of Council of Europe committed themselves to supporting the rights of national minorities, within the structure of laws and respecting the right of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁵¹⁶ The 1991 Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities also declared that national minorities form “an integral part of the society of the State in which they live.”⁵¹⁷

Such an approach to minorities has been reaffirmed in the practice of international institutions (UN, ICJ, OSCE etc.). for example in 1921, when solving the dispute over the territorial integrity of the Finns and the claim to self-determination by the Aland Islanders who were overwhelmingly Swedish, the Commission of Reporters appointed by the League of Nations concluded that the Aland Islanders, unlike the Finns, were not a “people”, but simply a ‘minority’. Minorities, the Commission declared, could not be treated “in the same manner or on the same footing as people as a whole”, and in particular were not entitled to the right to self-determination.⁵¹⁸

The principle of territorial integrity clearly prevailed over the separatist desires of the Aland islanders. Hence, the Azerbaijan Republic declared its readiness to negotiate with the Armenians on using the Aland model to settle the NK conflict.⁵¹⁹ Similarly, in accordance with the arguments of the Azerbaijani authorities, the Serbian attempt to choose self-determination is another example of procedures of international law being used to vindicate their opinions. This recently happened in 1991 with the formation of the Yugoslav conference.

The Arbitration Commission of the assembly rejected the Serbian claim despite the fact that they comprised about one third of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. However, the Commission held that “the Serbian population in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia must be afforded every right accorded to minorities under international conventions as well as

national and international guarantees consistent with the principles of international law.⁵²⁰

It should be mentioned that such a distinction between peoples and national minorities raises new problems. Since only peoples are entitled to self-determination in contemporary international law, many ethnic groups, who are also minorities, also identify themselves as peoples and claim a right to self-determination.⁵²¹ Moreover if a people can be defined as a “nation”, then ethnic groups may be able to claim to be a people.⁵²²

Such a definition would endanger the principle of territorial integrity and therefore, it is argued, peace and stability. That is why a number of limitations have been imposed on the degree of self-determination. First of all, the methods of obtaining independence via self-determination have been seriously restricted. International law establishes the following modes of implementation of self-determination: free association or integration with an independent state; or the development into other political status freely determined by a people. However international institutions and states refuse to recognize secession from an independent state as a means to achieving self-determination. The Conference on Yugoslavia Arbitration Commission chose Opinion two i.e. self determination, over opinion one i.e the dissolution of SFRY when solving a complicated dispute with regard to self-determination claimed that the Serbian population in Bosnia and Croatia explicitly opted for the pre-eminence of territorial integrity over self-determination. Paragraph 1 of the opinion clearly expressed this:

*“It is well established that, whatever the circumstances, the right to self-determination must not involve changes of existing frontiers at the time of independence except where the states concerned agree otherwise.”*⁵²³

Such treatment of self-determination describes the position of the majority of states willing to preserve their territorial integrity. Thus, as a rule, in the case of a dispute between the territorial integrity of independent states and the self-determination of people living in its territory, only the internal aspect of self-determination is applicable under the provisions of international law. Claims that the legal principle of self-determination supports the secession of parts of an existing state have also generally been rejected in international law.⁵²⁴

With the single exception of Bangladesh, whose independence was due more to the Indian army than to the precepts of international law, no secessionist claim has been accepted by the international community since 1945.⁵²⁵ It was because of oppression, rather than the fact that the Bengalis were linguistically or culturally different and geographically distant from other Pakistanis, which ultimately justified the creation of Bangladesh under ‘oppression theory.’⁵²⁶

The clear parameters of oppression allowing secession from an independent state have yet to be clarified. It is plain, however, that those parameters extend far beyond the strict confines of paragraph 7 of Resolution 2625 (XXV) which emphasized the internal aspect of self-determination and disallowed

the infringement of territorial integrity. Therefore, the claims of ethnic groups to self-determination have generally been rejected.

Azeri jurists are of the opinion that the limitations of both fundamental principles and particularly those of self-determination are viewed as the primary means to preserve peace and stability in the world. It can be said that they are essential to prevent it from splitting into numerous entities and at the same time to ensure basic rights and freedoms for every individual and group.⁵²⁷

In brief, the Azeris believe that the Armenian's insistence on achieving independence and the right to self-determination, as well as their expression of baseless claims, have led to the perpetuation of a fragile situation and produced a deadlock.

Yashar Aliyev, a Azerbaijani diplomat, argued in 1998 that with regard to Armenia's interpretation of the principle of "self-determination", it should be noted that it only became outspoken about this issue after expelling 200,000 Azerbaijanis from Armenia between 1988 and 1990, even though Armenia had been their home for centuries. Today, there are no Azerbaijanis in Armenia according to Aliyev. As a result, Armenia has become essentially a mono-ethnic state with practically no ethnic minorities. Therefore, Armenia has no right whatsoever to press for the right of self-determination within another country, especially when it is pursuing unfounded territorial claims in that country - claims which have been endorsed "*de jure*" by the Armenian

parliament. Incidentally, for generations, it is argued that thousands of Azerbaijanis had lived in Armenia without enjoying any form of autonomy. The Armenian population of the NK region of Azerbaijan, on the other hand, enjoyed autonomy in the political, social and cultural spheres. It was a Soviet-styled autonomy (although incomplete and imperfect), but nevertheless, an autonomy with freedom to use the Armenian language in the public sphere (for example, the region's legislature), the educational sphere (Stepanakert Pedagogical Institute), and the cultural sphere (Stepanakert Drama Theatre) as well as in the media. Nevertheless, a legitimate desire of NK's Armenians to improve all aspects of their lives and to strengthen their ties with Armenia is understandable and has been met with no resistance. However, according to Aliiev, these aspirations do not entitle them to an independence justified by the right of external "self-determination". In principle, the Armenian people have already exercised their right to self-determination. There is an independent state – the Republic of Armenia - which is a member of the UN and other international institutions - but has there ever been a single nation made up of two separate states? Secondly, is the Azerbaijani population of NK supposed to desist or are they to proceed with the same "logic" of self-determination and create another Azerbaijani sector within an "independent NK"? Such an absurdity leads only to deadlock. Or is the right to self-determination only available to the Armenians of NK?⁵²⁸

Conclusion

After deliberating on the legal aspects of the NK conflict, we have reached the conclusion that international approaches to this problem do not meet the needs of the conflicting parties or satisfy them. In this respect, a number of factors have brought about such an understanding, some of which are rooted in international law and others in the special situation of the NK conflict.

The most important element in the former is the existence of a certain ambivalence in the provisions of international law, especially regarding the right to self-determination for NK, which contains many ambiguities with respect to its principles and standards. For example, “Do Karabakh Armenians enjoy the visible aspect of the right to self-determination, what about the Azeris living in NK and can NK be counted as a colonial country?

Although it is assumed that international law is a neutral source to guide and lead the settling of disputes between conflicting parties, most of the time there is an element of vagueness in the details of the provisions, the understanding of which requires arbitrators. In fact, this problem has a purpose: the basic logic of which necessitates that the removal of the ambiguities may not be desirable, because the final result should be in accordance with the wishes of the international community, or to be more precise, the superpowers. So the international community has always matched its legal views and political intentions with the concerns of its members.

As a result, the international-legal aspects should, one might think, make their own decisive contribution to the solution of the conflict. However, they, in their turn, come to form part of the conflict between two major principles: the right of nations to self-determination as against the principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of the state's borders.

While Azerbaijan insists that the status of Karabakh should be accommodated within the framework of its own territorial integrity, the Armenians, addressing the principle of the right to self-determination, argue that the latter's status should be defined from a clean sheet.⁵²⁹

Highlighting the legal and legitimate structures of state, arranged through referenda and elections, and also addressing the discrimination during the Soviet rule, the Karabakh Armenians invoke the principle of the right to self-determination and call for their legitimate and moral right to put it into effect. On the other hand, the Azeris declare their readiness to grant a high level of autonomy to the secessionists while insisting on preserving their territorial integrity.

The Karabakh Armenians consider that secession from Azerbaijan is their legitimate right according to USSR law, while Azerbaijan relies on the idea that the United Nations, the OSCE and many other states have recognized the independence of the Azerbaijan Republic within the borders of the former Soviet Azerbaijan. Thus, the measures taken by Karabakh are in open violation of the principle of the inviolability of Azerbaijan's internationally-

recognized borders and its territorial integrity. Therefore, we are here witness to the clash of two views, and it is quite obvious that seasoned jurists must decide which of these has priority. Do the laws of a country which has disintegrated – the Soviet Union - prevail over international recognition or, given its collapse, should the international community replace all Soviet laws?⁵³⁰

As a result, as long as this challenge and opposition exist between the two principles, the settlement of the conflict is doubtful. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, not only the ambiguity of the provisions of international law itself but also some ambiguities that are rooted in the dispute have caused its solutions to be ineffective. Thus, in the NK conflict, both sides challenge each other's values.

Many scholars believe that in the question of values, negotiation on the basis of compromise is an improbable event.⁵³¹ Thus, the resolution of the confrontation is highly unlikely because of failing to rely on the suggestions proposed by international law or on compromise, and it seems that the only answer is on the basis of a political programme of policy decisions.

In a speech at the conference held in Yerevan on 25 April 2002, focusing on preparing the ground to establish peace in the Caucasus, Vladimir Kazimirov, the Russian former representative in the Minsk group stated: "I have always notified the parties in dispute that God has forbidden you from examining the legalities. This route will lead to a deadlock. The solution must be discovered

only in the political sphere. Whether you like it or not, the NK struggle is political rather than simply legal."⁵³²

It should be mentioned that in the new world order, some scholars do not believe in the purity and inviolability of borders as they did in the Cold War era, something that was necessary for global peace. But in today's new international order, "unalterable borders" are considered a questionable issue, and it is advisable that a more flexible policy should be taken according to the needs of the times.⁵³³

On the contrary, other jurists consider the principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders as the most important means of preserving peace and stability in the world and stress their priority, which has been specified in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Charter of the United Nations.⁵³⁴

Undoubtedly, such differences and contradictory interpretations over the two concepts of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, on the one hand, and the insistence on either of the principles by the opposing parties, finally drew certain scholars, particularly Vladimir Kazimirov, to advocate merely political solutions.

It seems that the working out of the NK conflict depends more on the influence of the principal powers in the region, particularly the United States and Russia, as opposed to the antagonists. In this regard, the viewpoints of

other regional powers like Iran and Turkey are important too. Thus, as mentioned earlier, until the power struggle is finally resolved and the rivalry and sphere of influence of the leading powers has been clarified, there can be little expectation of a settlement of the quarrel.

Also, by relying on the existing principles of international law, a settlement of the NK struggle is very doubtful, and considering the ambiguities of the legal articles, the jurists have not been able to come up with a legal formula to settle the dispute. This is why the principle of territorial integrity seems to prevail over that of the right of self-determination and why statesmen, fearing the disintegration of their country, give it great support.

Chapter 8: Prospects of the Last Socio-Political Atmosphere in Azerbaijan and Armenia

Introduction

After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1989, Azerbaijan gained independence in December 1991. President Mutalebov was forced to resign after Khojalev city in NK territory was occupied by the Armenians in March 1992. The new presidential election was held in Azerbaijan in June of the same year and brought to power the Azerbaijani popular front and its leader Abulfaz Elchibey, whose policy was to oppose Russia and Iran and strengthen relations with Turkey. In his campaign he promised that he would protect the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and resolve the conflict. His period of office was pro-Turkish and pan-Turkish as well as anti-Iranian and anti-Russian. Defeat in combat resulted in the termination of his rule in June 1993. His government was unseated through a coup which was organized by an army colonel, Surat Huseinov. The latter surrendered his position to Heidar Aliyev, who was a communist party chief in the 1970s and a Politburo member who became President in October 1993. In March 1994 he concluded a ceasefire with Armenia. Currently, Azerbaijan has mainly two political groups; the first is the government consisting of the New Azerbaijani party and a number of small formations. Secondly, there is the opposition which is made up mainly of four parties: the Democrats, the Popular front, the Musavat and the ANIP.

The Armenians are nationalistic people and the Armenian diaspora, who live in different parts of the world, particularly in the US, Russia, France, Greece, Iran and Canada, have large lobbies in these countries. Leon Ter Petrosian was an important figure on the Karabakh committee and in the Armenian National Movement. In the first parliamentary election held in May 1990, he was elected speaker and in 1991, with his pro-market vision, realistic view of foreign relations, the Armenian genocide (by Ottoman Turks during the First World War) and his aim of resolving the NK conflict. He was then elected the first Armenian President, a position which allows him to wield unlimited power where he is able to dismiss the Prime Minister, dissolve parliament and appoint the head of the constitutional court.

With regard to his domestic policies, Ter Petrosian banned the Dashnaksiun party in December 1994 and ordered the arrest of Hovanesian and many other members. He also expelled Markarian as the leader of the party. He also ordered the banning of *Yergir* the largest daily newspaper in Armenia which was owned by the Dashnaksiun party and was founded in 1890. Its ideology was heavily nationalist as it wished for a united Armenia. It became the most active political party in Armenia after independence and opened an office in NK which advocated its independence, and as they were already well represented among the Armenian diaspora, they played a significant role in aiding NK.

Robert Kocharian replaced Ter Petrosian, after he resigned over opposition to his efforts to find a compromise over the conflict Robert Kocharian replaced

him after he was elected President in 1998 with the support of the Dashnaktsiun party. In addition, this party won many seats in parliament and a few of its members were allocated ministerial positions in the cabinet. With regard to his international policy, Kocharian signed a military agreement with Russia in 1992.

In the first part of this chapter I consider the sociopolitical atmosphere in Azerbaijan and Armenia I also discuss the way in which the conflict influenced the internal and domestic politics in both nations. Understanding public opinion and the domestic politics of the opposing parties as one the key factors in this conflict would make any proposal more realistic, hence their inclusion in this chapter.

In the second part, the preferred solutions of the warring parties are discussed, based on the latest developments of the official authorities in Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK. The aim is to gather all the solutions and explore the views of each party regarding them, as all those involved in the conflict have their own solution to the dispute. Furthermore in this chapter, I review the solutions suggested by international mediators and organisations, including the “more than autonomy not a state” concept, the exchange of territories idea, the Associated State recommendation, the Cyprus model, the Chechen variant, the Common State and Tatarstan models as well as the proposal of the Trans-Caucasian Confederation.

The Conflict & the Sociopolitical Atmosphere in Armenia, Azerbaijan & NK

In this part, brief information about the positions of influential political forces and movements towards the NK conflict in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and NK are presented. Thus, we will become familiar with the sociopolitical atmosphere of the three societies: Azerbaijan, Armenia and Karabakh.

The conflict and the positions of the political forces in the Republic of Armenia

Generally, three kinds of stance are observed among influential political forces in Armenia regarding the settlement of NK:

Supporters of the independence or the integration of NK into Armenia

These are the overwhelming majority of the right and left-centrist forces of Armenia. The ruling Republican Party of Armenia (RPA), (Which is in power currently, August 2009) the ARF (Dashnaktsutyun), the People's Party of Armenia, the National Democratic Party, Ajam, the "Constitutional Rights" Union, the "Law-Based State" party and others, the members of which make up the overwhelming majority of deputies in the Armenian parliament. These groups enjoy the support of between 75 to 80 per cent of Armenian citizens.⁵³⁵

The supporters of the resolution of the Karabakh conflict by Armenia and NK joining the Belarus-Russian Union.

Members of this group included the CPA, APIRBA, the majority of parties and organizations forming the broad coalition of socialist powers in Armenia. In spite of collecting about one million signatures in 1995, and because of the opposition of the right-centrist parties which have always been the ruling party, the organization gradually lost its position and its advocates, so that they have less than ten per cent of the advocators at the present time.⁵³⁶

The supporters of concessions to Azerbaijan

The Armenian National Movement (ANM) - the ruling party in the reign of Leon Ter Petrosian, the ex-President of Armenia, is a member of this group. In fact, the opponents of Ter Petrosian accused him of compromise on the "Karabakh aim" Leading to him and his colleagues being forced to abdicate power. It should be mentioned that the Armenian National Movement (ANM) only agreed with the proposed Step-by-Step peace plan to commence the peace talks (handing over of the occupied territories, returning the refugees in the first phase, and determining the political status of the NK in the second phase). But the opponents of the ex-President believed that if the occupied territories, which guarantee the security of Karabakh, were surrendered, Azerbaijan would certainly not agree with Karabakh independence. Hence, they considered accepting the Step-by-Step approach of the ANM, that is, a compromise with Azerbaijan over the "Karabakh Ideal."⁵³⁷

In Armenia, the *Nor Oghi* (New Way) party also agrees with handing over NK to Azerbaijan, despite having a limited number of members.) The "New Way" party, even in 1993 emphasized the need to surrender NK to Azerbaijan.⁵³⁸

Generally, the final assessment of the sociopolitical attitude towards Karabakh indicates that during the past few years, people's support for the pro-Karabakh policies of the Armenian authorities have diminished for a variety of reasons. The most important of which is related a negative effect on the local and foreign economies of Armenia, and on the people.

It seems that the Armenian people have become less concerned about the future of Karabakh compared to earlier years. The majority of Armenian political forces and people are in favour of either Karabakh independence or integration into Armenia, because in spite of the opposition of some political forces and the Armenian President, it is unlikely that they would support any plan whereby NK would be integrated into Azerbaijan. In fact, this claim was confirmed in April 2001 through the opposition of parliamentary factions against solutions that predicted Karabakh's abrupt following of Azerbaijan.

Taking into account the fact that 2002 – 2003 were the years of preparation for the next Presidential elections in Armenia and NK, many political forces adopted radical stands in the question of the settlement of the conflict. An obvious example of this tendency was the emergence of a prominent movement that opposed the return of the Azeri occupied territories around NK even after the reaching of a political settlement. Their slogan suggested that

these territories should not be called "occupied" but rather "liberated" territories. As one of the leaders of this movement stated recently, "Our concession to Azerbaijan is the fact that at its request in 1994 we stopped our advance, otherwise that state would have collapsed. No concession must be made to Azerbaijan."⁵³⁹

The expression of such views in Azerbaijan, especially in situations where militarism is sometimes advocated as a means of settling the conflict, means it has a direct influence in intensifying the sociopolitical climate of Armenia to the benefit of Karabakh.

The conflict & the positions of NK political forces

All the political forces in this non-recognised state (including the pro-power coalition, the CP and ARF (D)) are in favour of the independence of NK or its reunification with Armenia

Despite the many varying viewpoints regarding the conflict, all the political forces and movements are in full agreement with their statesmen. Their real goal is nothing short of independence and integration with Armenia, as can be deduced from their opposition to any proposal that put Karabakh under the control of Azerbaijan or any policy based on having horizontal relations with that state. Of course the Karabakhi political forces are more radical than the statesmen and they openly express their political goals.⁵⁴⁰

The conflict & the positions of the political forces in the Republic of Azerbaijan

In 2001, the various factions in Azerbaijan created a document for the settlement of the NK conflict, called the "Charter of the Four", which was signed by the leaders of the main political parties, religious leaders and representatives of the intelligentsia.⁵⁴¹ This was delivered to the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group and sent to international organizations by the President of Azerbaijan. It embodies Azerbaijan's opinions and positions regarding the resolution of the conflict. The charter assumes that the disagreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia can only be settled stage-by-stage and with the consistent observance of the following four principles:

1. All occupied lands must be cleared and the territorial integrity of the state restored.
2. Refugees and those forced to resettle elsewhere, including Shusha and other settlements in NK, must return to their homes, and the security of their lives must be guaranteed.
3. NK can be granted the right of self-government, but the powers implementing the sovereignty of the state must be left to the supreme organs of power in Azerbaijan.
4. If the settlement of the conflict by peaceful methods turns out to be impossible, Azerbaijan, in accordance with the UN Charter and certain resolutions of the Security Council, must banish the aggressors, using force.⁵⁴²

Although some groups like the Social-Democratic Party and the Institution of Peace and Democracy under the leadership of Leyla Yunosov presented a strategy opposed to the Charter,⁵⁴³ on the whole the positions of the majority of Azerbaijan's political movements were favourable to it.

Mechanism for the Settlement of the Conflict According to the Desired Solutions of the Conflicting Parties

It is quite reasonable that each of the contending parties should have their own solution to the final determination of the NK quarrel. Because being informed of the desired outcomes and solutions will make us familiar with the crux of the problem and enable us to analyze the proposed solutions up to the present, in this part we briefly review the methods of conflict resolution based on the final positions of the rival parties.

As the views of NK Azeris have a great influence on the policies and positions of the Azerbaijani authorities, their ideas will be separately reviewed in a section dedicated to that purpose.

The Position of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan insists on the fact that the conflict stemmed from the military offensive initiated by the Armenians against Azerbaijan with the aim of seizing and uniting part of its territory to Armenia. As a result of this aggression, Armenia appropriated territories outside the borders of NK and hundreds of

thousands of inhabitants from six regions of Azerbaijan became refugees. Azerbaijan demands, as initial measures, the withdrawal of Armenian military formations from the occupied territories as well as a return of refugees to their homes. It is also ready to grant NK the highest status of self-government within the structure of the Azeri state, the form and the degree of which are not specified and must be worked out in the course of negotiations. Of course, Azerbaijan's position is that NK would enjoy self-rule but play no role in foreign affairs, defence or nation-level taxation.⁵⁴⁴

The main point, according to this position, is the maintenance of the Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and its recognition within the borders of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The Azerbaijan Republic believes such a position (i.e. the existence of the unrecognized NK Republic) to be entirely the result of aggression on the part of Armenia.

The Position of the Azeris of NK

The position of the Azeris of NK is rarely voiced but its official version on the whole coincides with that of the leaders of Azerbaijan. The Organization for the Freedom of Karabakh (OFK)'s viewpoint on the solution to the conflict consists of a demand for the military forces to quit the occupied lands as soon as possible and also the return of refugees to the places of their former habitation. After leaving the occupied territories, discussions must start for the achieving of a stable peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia, concerning the possibility of the formation of structures of self-government on the territory of

Azerbaijan for the Armenian population of that Republic and in the territory of Armenia for the Azeri population, driven out by the former. This would require bringing to the table the resources of international organizations including the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, as well as forums of civic diplomacy and human rights organizations.

The OFK presumes that the main principle of the structures - securing the peaceful co-existence of Azeri and Armenian populations in the territories of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Republic of Armenia - must include the following: a complete correspondence of the statuses of administrative rights and powers of the structures formed in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The OFK believes that a stable peace in the region is possible only if the conflict finds a just solution. The two communities will be able to live in a stable, just and flourishing world only if there is neither victor nor vanquished, if nobody is able to profit from the results of ethnic purges and aggression.⁵⁴⁵

The Position of the Authorities of NK

There is an acknowledgement of NK's right to self-determination, going as far as the formation of an independent state. The leadership of NK gives priority to the question of status in its approach to finding a solution. In short, it believes that according to all the clauses of international law, the Republic of NK must be recognized as a lawfully-formed independent state. NK rejects any attempts to restore the *status quo ante* and an extension of the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan over it. The leadership of the NKR believes that they

won a military victory and the armed forces of Azerbaijan were defeated. And this fact must be taken into account when it comes to a solution to the question of status, because there is no historical precedent for a victor accepting the dominance of the defeated. The relations between NK and the Azerbaijan Republic can only be of a horizontal character with certain modifications. Therefore the minimal solution that the Karabakh Armenians are ready to accept is a form of union, confederation or federation which would guarantee Armenia and NK unrestricted contact opportunities.⁵⁴⁶

Also, the authorities of Stepanakert believe that the army is responsible for securing the independence of NK and guaranteeing the security of Karabakh Armenians. They therefore lay stress on maintaining it.

The declaration of the NKR as an independent republic means that its integration into Armenia is not on the agenda. It is said that the NKR does not hide the fact that its eventual goal is integration with Armenia. The matter of the return of territory occupied by the Army of Karabakh must be tied to the question of status, that is, according to the formula, "land in exchange for status."⁵⁴⁷

The Position of the Republic of Armenia

During the sovereignty of the USSR, the Armenian authorities petitioned several times for the integration of Karabakh with Armenia and it is quite reasonable that such an approach as a solution does not need to be

interpreted further. However, after the USSR's collapse, the Armenian authorities declined to present their preferred solution for a variety of reasons. Yerevan has officially announced that the present stance of the Republic of Armenia is as follows: it consents to any kind of settlement of the Karabakh problem, which is acceptable to the Armenians of NK, and the same goes for the question of status. Proceeding from this, the leadership of the Republic of Armenia does not demand or insist on uniting NK with the Republic of Armenia. Therefore, the December 1989 resolutions of the Republic of Armenia and the NK parliaments regarding the integration of NK and Armenia remain on paper only. This, together with the fact that Armenia does not officially recognize the independence of NKR is intended to ease the situation, to provide room for manoeuvre and to leave them a loop-hole for political negotiation.⁵⁴⁸

Proposed Solutions & Plans up the Present

In this part, our aim is to collect all the solutions that have been proposed regarding the NK conflict and become familiar with the political solutions envisaged for the NK dispute and the position of the conflicting parties towards each solution.

More Than Autonomy But Not a State

Amongst the attempts to find an acceptable solution to the NK conflict were schemes which may be provisionally described as: "more than autonomy but

not a state" – a solution used in Åland. Thus, it can probably be used as a model for Karabakh. The Azerbaijani authorities consider it as the most acceptable solution to the NK conflict.⁵⁴⁹

The Ålands is an archipelago of 8,000 islets, situated in the Baltic Sea. The population have spoken Swedish from time immemorial and up until 1808 existed within the structure of the Swedish Kingdom. At that time both Norway and Finland were parts of Sweden. As an outcome of the 1808-1809 war Sweden had to surrender Finland and hand over the Ålands to Russia. After its defeat in the Crimean War in 1856, Russia had to recognize the Ålands as a de-militarized zone. At the beginning of the 20th century a national referendum was held and Norway peacefully seceded from Sweden.

In 1917, Russia recognized the independence of Finland. At that time the Swedish population of the Ålands expressed their desire to re-unite with their ancient motherland and sent the king of Sweden a petition signed by the entire adult population of the archipelago. In December 1917 Finland opposed the wishes of the Åland population and suggested that the terms of self-determination should be coordinated with it. The islanders rejected these suggestions. A conflict was brewing but neither side resorted to arms. In 1921 the League of Nations passed a resolution: the Åland Islands were declared a neutral and de-militarized territory of Finland. According to this ruling Finland was given the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of the Swedish language, customs and traditions and the development of Swedish culture for the population of the islands.

Sweden and Finland concluded a Treaty in which the population of the Alands received the right to maintain their language, culture and institutions. As a result, the threat of assimilation vanished. Sweden obtained guarantees regarding the security of the Swedish population of the islands and the right to unhindered association. According to the Law of 1922 on self-government, the local parliament (Lagting) was entitled to adopt laws on the internal affairs of the islands and on the budget. In accordance with the Constitution, the laws on self-government can be amended by the Parliament of Finland only with the consent of the Lagting of the Alands.

The law-making powers of the Lagting are defined in the following spheres: education and culture; the health service; economy; transport; communal economy; police; post-office; and radio and television. In these domains the Alands have the powers of a sovereign state. All the remaining legal powers are the prerogative of Finland such as foreign policy; the majority of the civil code; court and criminal law; customs and money circulation. To defend the interests of the Aland population one deputy from the archipelago is elected to the Parliament of Finland. With the consent of the Lagting the President of Finland may appoint the governor of the islands.

The powers of the governor are to head the Council of the representatives of the islands (which is organized on an equal footing) and to open and close sessions of the Lagting. Economic relations are set out in the following way: the government of Finland levies taxes collects customs and other imposts on

the islands in the same way as it does throughout the country. The expenses on the archipelago are covered from the state budget. The archipelago receives a proportion of state income after the deduction of a part of it to pay off state debt. It is left to the Lagting to decide how to distribute the rest according to its budget. The laws adopted by the Lagting are sent to the President of Finland who has the right of veto. This veto can be exercised in two instances: if the Parliament of the islands should exceed its powers or the adopted law represents a threat to the internal and external security of Finland.

The right to live on the islands is equivalent to the right to citizenship. Every child born on the islands has that right on condition that one of its parents is a citizen of the Alands. Alanders are also citizens of Finland. The right of Aland citizenship is granted to any citizen of Finland who has moved to the archipelago and has lived there for five years on condition that they have knowledge of the Swedish language. Restrictions on the ownership of real estate are accounted for by a wish to secure the lands for Alanders. A citizen of the Alands is exempted from serving in the Finnish Army. It is forbidden to garrison troops and build fortifications on the islands. The Alanders may directly cooperate with Scandinavian countries. The government of the Alands also takes part in the work of the Council of Ministers of the Scandinavian countries. Foreign policy is the prerogative of the government of Finland and the Finnish Parliament. But if Finland signs an international treaty that affects the internal affairs of the Alands then the implementation of the treaty should be coordinated with the Lagting.⁵⁵⁰

International intermediaries proposed the Aland model as a possible solution to the conflict. On 21st to 22nd December 1993, on the initiative of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the RF and Finland and the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, a symposium of Azeri, Armenian and NK parliamentarians was held on the Aland Islands at which the details of the model were presented. While some Azerbaijani official authorities showed partiality towards the Aland model,⁵⁵¹ it was rejected by the authorities of NK as one "which does not take into account the historical foundations and psychological consequences of the Karabakh-Azeri conflict and of the war fought *de facto* for independence from the Azerbaijan Republic". Besides, according to the firm conviction of the Armenian side, the Aland model was not applicable to the conditions of the South Caucasus, because the question of the status of the archipelago in the 1920s did not constitute a single problem. It was solved in the framework of a general issue, the so-called "Sweden problem" in Finland. The Swedes were able to balance their rights not only in the Alands, but also throughout Finland as a whole, where the Swedish language is the second state language.⁵⁵²

It is noteworthy that in late 2004, the National Committee of the Azerbaijani Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, together with the Finnish ambassador to the South Caucasus, prepared a plan called the "Aland model" to settle the NK conflict. Also, on the initiative of this committee and under the supervision of the Finnish government and the Alands Peace Institution, a delegation consisting of the members of the committee, the representatives of the

government and the parliament, the Organization for the Freedom of Karabakh, journalists and Karabakh Azeris and Armenian communities, paid a visit to Finland.⁵⁵³

It should be mentioned that in reaction to this proposal, the Karabakhi authorities declared that they and Yerevan disagreed with the Alands model for the settlement of the conflict. Simultaneously, the Russian representative of the Minsk Group disliked the idea of using the Alands model..In the middle of the 1990s the Finland-Sweden model for the resolution of the dispute was debated but it came to nothing. Thus, at the present time the mediators face serious problems, as they should not resume talks about a solution which had been rejected by two out of the three parties in the conflict.⁵⁵⁴ According to the *Eco* newspaper, this proposal was discussed and analyzed by the Azeri and Armenian representatives as well as the envoys of Alfred Motzar-Fredrikh Ebert, at a meeting in Brussels on 25th September 2001.⁵⁵⁵

This is not the only example of a proposal based on the principle of "more autonomy but not a state." Many statesmen and experts suggested such a way out as an opportunity for both sides to withdraw from the conflict with dignity and minimal losses to their security and self-respect (which is also important). Another such example was presented by the American researchers D. Laitin and R.Suny.⁵⁵⁶ They argue:

- Karabakh *de jure* must remain within the structure of Azerbaijan to conform with the principle of the territorial integrity of a state and the inadmissibility of unilaterally-forced changes to borders. The symbolic

sovereignty of Azerbaijan over Karabakh could be represented by the Azeri flag waving over the Government building in Karabakh and by the appointment of an Azeri representative there, who would have to be approved by the Karabakh government. The formal aspect of sovereignty implies the fact that Azerbaijan would represent Karabakh in the United Nations and other international organisations.

- The citizens of Karabakh must have proportional representation in the Azerbaijani Parliament in Baku. The Karabakh representatives in the Azerbaijani Parliament must have the power to stop any proposed law, which directly concerns Karabakh.
- The establishment of full self-government for the Republic of Karabakh, within the borders of the Azerbaijan Republic, presupposes the formation of their own Parliament with proportional representation, the right of veto on the resolutions of Azerbaijan concerning this republic, sovereign rights of its government in the matters of security, education, culture and investments in infrastructure.
- The absence of units of the armed forces and police on each other's territory without mutual consent.
- The Armenians and Azeris living in Karabakh would have the right to dual citizenship or full citizenship in either republic with the right to permanent domicile in Karabakh.

Summing up the above, it should be noted that the options of the type "more than autonomy but not a state", "associated state" and "common state" often have interrelated characteristics that are difficult to clearly differentiate.

Exchange of Territories

As far back as 1988 a group of lawyers, headed by Andrei Sakharov, proposed a variant of "separating Armenians and Azeris" as the basis of a solution, but at the time, this variation failed to generate much discussion. The first developed plan for such an alternative was proposed by American academic Paul Goble, who believed that Azerbaijan and Armenia are unable to solve this problem themselves. He also added that no single solution is possible, if the sides try to return to the *status quo ante*, i.e. to the situation existing before the start of the current struggle in 1988.⁵⁵⁷

Now the situation has changed and it dictates the need to find a new approach to the NK conflict. Goble thinks that "in principle there are three ways 'to solve' the NK problem: (i) to oust or kill all Armenians living there now; (ii) to mobilize a great number of foreign forces to move these sides apart or (iii) to keep the NKAR Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan, which was the status of NK during the Soviet Rule. It can be said that its realization is impossible for several reasons: the first option because of moral considerations, the second because it is not physically possible, and the "third is impossible because in that case Azerbaijan would become the side unfairly treated both by losing its territory and in the question of a water supply for Baku". Therefore, he sees the key to the solution of the problem in the exchange of territories, including the following terms: Firstly, handing over part of NK to Armenia together with the areas where rivers flowing in the direction of Azerbaijan rise. Secondly, handing over the Armenian territory,

located between the Azerbaijan Republic and Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan's control.

Evidently, Goble understood that if this choice was implemented, Armenia would find itself in a difficult situation because it would lose its connection with Iran, something which is vitally important for Armenia. This is why in 1996 he brought in some amendments to his plan. In particular, he proposed to form a corridor through the southern Meghri region of Armenia to Iran, where some international forces would be stationed. Goble later suggested handing over a part of the NKAR to Armenia in exchange for a piece of Armenian territory, namely the Meghri region, to Azerbaijan. This would enable Azerbaijan to have an immediate border with Nakhchivan.⁵⁵⁸

For a variety of reasons, Goble's plan did not enjoy the support of Armenia or NK. It is important, however, to note that, according to information from media and opposition figures in Armenia, some variant of the territorial exchange like the one proposed by Goble was seriously considered during talks between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2000-2001. During direct meetings in Paris, and Key West in the United States, both Presidents had discussed territorial exchange and handing over the corridor under international observation and security.⁵⁵⁹

As mentioned before, because of the firm opposition of Azerbaijani political forces, after returning to his country, Aliiev abandoned the negotiations and reached a final agreement on the Paris and Key West principles. In Armenia

too, the pressure of the opposition and their objection to handing over Meghri to Azerbaijan finally led to the breaking off of negotiations in this regard.⁵⁶⁰

Associated State

Statesmen and political scientists often pay great attention to the concept of the associated state, as an alternative solution for ethno-political conflicts, including the NK dispute. They usually refer to the resolutions and pronouncements of the UN, in particular to resolution 2625, adopted by the General Assembly in 1970: the "Declaration on the Principles of International Law Pertaining to Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States". This declaration admits three forms of realisation for the right of self-determination: formation of a new state; association with an already existing independent state or the status of a different level provided it is approved by the free will of a given people. In the present case the variant of free association with an independent state is of some interest. This version is not only a political concept but is already realised in practice. The islands of Cook and Near at present enjoy associated statehood with New Zealand, while Puerto Rico, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have associated statehood with the USA. The last two - the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia - even became members of the UN in 1990. Oskanyan, the Armenian Foreign Minister, has doubtlessly mentioned these solutions and announced the readiness of Armenia to examine solutions like common state, free dependence, and integrated states.⁵⁶¹

John Maresca, the former special representative of US negotiations on NK, worked out and presented a plan for a political solution on 1st July 1994. His proposition consists of eight chapters, the first of which is "The Status of NK". It should be noted that Nagorno Karabkh was to be called the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and be a completely self-governed legal formation within the sovereign state of Azerbaijan and associated with it."⁵⁶² Maresca proposed to adopt a Main Law regarding the status of the NKR, where its clauses would bring about the associated integration of the NKR with Azerbaijan. It was suggested that representative offices should be set up in Stepanakert and Baku and that the NKR could have permanent representatives in the capitals of countries considered to be of special importance such as Yerevan and Moscow, and receive corresponding representatives from those countries. But the "NKR must not be recognised as a sovereign independent state" According to Maresca's plan, "The armed forces of the NKR must be gradually scaled down."⁵⁶³

The NKR must be entitled to local security forces, including self-defence forces, but must not have weapons of an offensive character. Azerbaijan would also gain the right to station local security forces in the NKR but it could not locate weapons of an offensive character in or near the NKR. There are some clauses in Maresca's proposal about Armenia's right to maintain transit links with the NKR through the Lachin corridor, and Azerbaijan's right to do the same with Nakhchivan through Armenian territory. There are also articles about the return of refugees to the places of their former residence, about making the Republic of Armenia and the Azerbaijan Republic, including NK

and Nakhchivan, a free trade zone, about the convening of a conference of donors for financial support of the Azerbaijan Republic and the Republic of Armenia, including NK and Nakhchivan, etc. And finally, Maresca proposes that the OSCE and UN Security Council should become guarantors for implementing the terms of this document.⁵⁶⁴

The option of an associated state, though it stops short of unconditional integration to the laws and jurisdiction of Azerbaijan, is nevertheless based on the principle of non-recognition of the independence of the NKR and regards it as part of the Azerbaijan Republic, retaining the NKR's vertical subordination to Azerbaijan. For the Armenian side, this absolutely fails to correspond to the internationally-acknowledged idea of an "associated state". In the NK leadership's opinion, relations with the Azerbaijan Republic must be founded on the principle of complete equality, ruling out any vertical connections. Among the alternatives to this option can be included the so-called "synthetic variant", put forward in the mid 1990s by the director of the USA's National Institute of Democracy, ambassador Nelson Ledski.⁵⁶⁵ In his opinion, NK must become a virtual part of Armenia, although possibly, it should be connected in some form with the Azerbaijan Republic. "There's no doubt," Ledski says, "that the Armenians were a success in this war. And the Azeri side must acknowledge that it lost something". It would be pertinent here to recall, that, according to the Azeris, the constant reference of western analysts to the "military successes" and "results of war" represent a concealed hint that a "military solution" to the Karabakh problem is the only possible one.

It is easy to see that this permutation is close enough to the notion of the Common State Solution which was proposed by the co-chairman of the Minsk Group in December 1998. This chapter will now assess this variant by looking at the so-called "psychology of apprehension" of the opponents.

There is no doubt that NK has a *de facto* chance to exist as an independent state, with the retention of some political symbols, while formally remaining within the structure of Azerbaijan. But the Armenians are afraid of such a prospect, firstly, because if Azerbaijan's military-economic strength increases and its international position stabilises, it could take advantage of its legal right of sovereignty and cancel the *de facto* independence of NK. The absence of an absolute guarantee makes NK afraid of even the symbolic attribute of NK belonging to Azerbaijan. The other reason is the dynamics of the demographic and migration processes in Azerbaijan, capable, in the opinion of the Armenians, of leading to a repetition of the Nakhichevan scenario, where the Azeris, by weight of numbers, allegedly ousted the Armenian population."

Since the Armenian authorities insist on the stipulation of the "results of war" in future conflict resolution, the proposed subordination of NK to the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan will inevitably face the resistance of the Armenians of NK and Armenia. Officials state that "after those victories, the people themselves will never allow it". The stance of the Azeri side is conditional, firstly by the firm conviction that upper and lower Karabakh constitute an

inseparable entity with other parts of the republic. Secondly, the belief that the systems and principles of international law (inviolability of borders, recognition of the Azerbaijan Republic by the UN and other international organisations within its factual borders etc.) support Azerbaijan and giving up these advantages would be preposterous. Thirdly, the Azeri side holds that the prospect for strengthening state power and, as a consequence, the possibility of revenge cannot be ruled out. Fourth, international law is inclined, especially of late, to accept precedents, which subsequently become the norm and take on a permanent character. Thus a “domino” effect will come into play: if Azerbaijan makes one concession, it will set a dangerous precedent perhaps leading to the secession of NK. One example of this cited by the Azeri side is the allowing of the NK Armenians as a party to the negotiations, which, according to the “domino” principle, is a step on the way to recognition of NK's independence.⁵⁶⁶

The Cyprus Model

The so-called Cyprus variant often emerges in discussions of ways to settle the Karabakh conflict and the status of NK. The basic idea of the Cyprus Model consists in the fact that this one, namely the Turkish republic of Northern Cyprus is not officially recognised by anybody, but exists and functions *de facto*.⁵⁶⁷ The Cyprus model as applicable to NK will mean: not recognising it *de jure*, but consent to its existence *de facto*. It means that NK will not be part and parcel of Azerbaijan or Armenia, it will not be officially

recognised as an independent state or a member of the international community, but will exist and function as an independent state.

The Cyprus Model, in the opinion of the Armenians, is a compromise solution. It may allow the sides to reconcile themselves to the existing state of affairs without hurting the national dignity of any group involved in the dispute. It will relax the situation, create breathing space and in future will encourage a broader approach to the solution of the problem. On the other hand, it will promote the normalisation of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, this suggestion fails to recognise the territorial character of the struggle.⁵⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that such a model, in the opinion of the Azeri side, has already been working for the past decade but has not lived up to anybody's expectations.⁵⁶⁹

The Chechen Variant

Right after the conclusion of the Khasavyurt agreements in 1996 between the leadership of the Russian Federation and Chechnya there appeared one more option for a resolution of the NK conflict, called the Chechen Variant. After a long and bloody war the Russian Federation and Chechnya came to an agreement on ceasing the war, establishing peace and freezing discussions on the status of Chechnya for five years. This is the sum and substance of the Chechen model, a particular "mechanism for a delayed political status."⁵⁷⁰ The final status of NK would be deferred for a number of

years pending a normalization of the relations between peoples and the return of refugees.⁵⁷¹

After the Russian-Chechen agreement, some factions in the Russian Federation, Armenia and the NK leadership started talking about the applicability of this model in relation to the Karabakh problem. It is necessary to consider this transition period during which the stances of the parties are determined. It is thought that if the question of status is delayed, say, for five years, during this interval a new generation of politicians may take the stage, and the geo-political situation in the South Caucasus as well as the economy will become more clearly defined by being more definitively outlined. Possibly, the sides of the conflict will cease to have an overly-categorical approach to negotiations. Thus, the problem may be freed from the deadlock. To sum up, the Chechen variant as applied to the problem of NK rests on three principles:

1. Ensuring maximum security for Karabakh and for the residents of the neighbouring territories of the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan.
2. The establishment of a transitional period of a minimum of five years during which the question of the political status of NK will be frozen. This will give some time and create more favourable political, geopolitical and economic conditions for the settlement of the Karabakh problem.
3. The emergence during this period of a new generation of politicians, free of the baggage and the mutual enmity of the preceding period, who will act in a new atmosphere and in new conditions.

It is not too difficult to see the following obvious obstacle: the Chechen Variant presumes that broad negotiations will enlist "the opposing sides to the conflict", but this has proved impossible even within the framework of the negotiations already going on between Armenia and Azerbaijan. One variation of the Chechen Variant is the Dayton peace treaty (1996) according to which the Serb population of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be granted "a delayed right of self-determination" after nine years. The then leader of NK, Kocharian stated on 27th February 1997 in Stepanakert that the "variant of the solution of the Karabakh issue when compared with the Chechen problem is quite acceptable to Karabakh. This proposal is not acceptable to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan, believes that the Chechen Variant is incompatible with the situation in NK. It argues that there is nowhere for Chechnya to integrate into, while NK has already widely integrated with the Republic of Armenia, and in five years will complete this process."⁵⁷² Moreover, Azerbaijan fears that such a solution, whatever the case in Chechnya, would lead to the perception of Azerbaijan as having *de facto* recognised the independence of NK.⁵⁷³

Common State

In 1998, the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group proposed a new approach to the disputing parties, called the Common State. It was, in fact, an attempt on the part of the Russians to find an "unconventional" solution, which would as far as possible formally combine the main demands: those of Azerbaijan for territorial integrity and those of NK for self-determination. In this solution, the establishment of "horizontal relations" between the Azerbaijani government

and the leadership of NK was proposed. This was in fact the consequence of a rejection of the Lisbon proposition by Armenia, which was prepared to satisfy the Armenian side by supporting Russia, but it was unacceptable to Azerbaijan. In the opinion of the Azerbaijani authorities, this proposition was against the Lisbon principles and violated their territorial integrity, so they refused to accept it.⁵⁷⁴

The Azerbaijani authorities declared that it was impossible to establish a government according to confederative principles between the Armenian racial minority with a population of less than 150,000 in Karabakh and the Azeris with eight million people (according to the Azeris, the Armenian population was less than two per cent of the whole, and even less than that of Russian nationals). In the Azeri view, this would mean the embedding of one government inside another, with a formal dependency on Azerbaijan. Moreover, based on this solution, the Azerbaijani government would not be able to sign any covenant or join any political block without the consent of the NK Proclaimed Government. This meant that the independence of eight million Azeris would be in the hands of the NK government. This is, at best, indicative of the political leanings of a Karabakh Armenian society with a population of 150,000. Thus, to the Azeris, handing over this part to the Armenian side would be better than this solution. But this does not mean that the Armenians agree with this answer to the problem.

The Baku authorities believe the reason is that Armenian military superiority ensures that they have greater demands.⁵⁷⁵ Of course, according to other

sources, the Armenian side, including Armenians from Armenia and Karabakh, has agreed with the Common State solution to settle the conflict peacefully.⁵⁷⁶ However, this alternative was proposed in a politically chaotic period resulting from terrorist action in parliament and the assassination of the Armenian Prime Minister in 1999, which was subsequently removed from the table. Some politicians believe this tragedy was of no relevance to Karabakh.⁵⁷⁷ The most important items of this variant published in the media are the following (not in the order presented in the official Minsk Group document):

- NK is a state and a territorial formation and together with the Azerbaijan Republic makes up a single nation with internationally recognised borders.
- The NK constitution and laws are effective in the territory of NK. The laws of the Azerbaijan Republic are also effective in the territory of NK if they do not run counter to the constitution and the laws of the latter.
- NK will be entitled to have direct external relations with foreign states in the spheres of economics, trade, science, education and culture.
- NK will have a National Guard and police force. These cannot act outside NK borders.
- The army, security forces and Azerbaijani police will not have a right to enter NK territory without the consent of the NK authorities.⁵⁷⁸

However, it seems that overall this idea was not fully defined. This is evident from the fact that there was no consensus about a name for the concept. It is clear that there are differences between the terms "single", "common" and "allied" states. In the first case – the “single state” - a unitarian form of state is

meant, an entity within the framework of which there may or may not be a limited or a "broad" autonomy. But in a "joint state" - two forms of state configuration are being described at once: a federation and a confederation. And the "allied state" necessitates the forming of a symmetric or asymmetric federation, and its subjects may exist on an equal or unequal legal footing. The Armenians of the NKR were in fact invited to become members of some kind of federation, though it is not certain what sort of amorphous status the Minsk Group co-chairman offered NK as part of this hypothetical federation.

As to the sum and substance of the proposals about a "common state", it should be noted that the matter concerns the notion of federalism in the countries of the South Caucasus, which Russia adhered to in its intermediary mission up until 1995 and only then abandoned it because of Azerbaijan's and Georgia's opposition. Besides, at the regulation stage of the NK dispute, this idea had already been put forward in a vague way by the USA. A study of the text of the proposals of the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group from the period November-December 1997 gives us grounds to believe that the main idea of the Russian Federation, the USA and France which allied Russia in this question - was the intention to expand the ordinary notions about interrelations between a "federal centre" and a "subject of the federation".

For instance, it was presumed that NK, while returning to the legal sovereignty of Azerbaijan, would nonetheless maintain all the external attributes of independent statehood, namely, the institutions of the presidency, parliament, government, constitution, court system, army (in the

form of a National Guard), the police, a state emblem, national anthem, flag and so on. But as to NK maintaining its communication links with the outside world, the following was offered:

In effect, Azerbaijan 'rents out' to the OSCE the zone of the Lachin corridor, whilst the OSCE establishes control over it "in collaboration and interaction" with the leadership of NK, using manpower provided by Stepanakert, working jointly with OSCE observers. NK was deprived of the possibility of carrying out an independent foreign policy and having an independent banking and finance sector. At the same time, this territory was declared to be a free economic zone with unlimited use of any foreign currency. However, NK participation in Azerbaijani foreign policy was not clarified within the context of the "common state" approach. So Karabakh diplomats and consuls may be present in all Azerbaijani embassies and representative offices located in other states and international organisations and they may also conclude agreements to promote foreign cooperation, with the consent of Azerbaijan, of course.⁵⁷⁹

These and other Minsk Group peace proposals enable us to conclude that, though their terminology speaks of preserving Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as a single state, the thrust of the proposals was to set a course towards the formation of a union of states between Azerbaijan and the NKR, that is to say a confederation, and an asymmetric one at that.

At the present moment, both NK and Armenia state that they are ready to accept these proposals as a basis for negotiations. Meanwhile Azerbaijan, referring to the norms of international law and their national interests, reject this suggestion.

The Tatarestan Model

The Tatarestan model implies the creation of an associated state, that is, a state within and associated with, a larger state. Other examples of such solutions include the Niue Island and New Zealand.⁵⁸⁰ The Republic of Tatarestan (enjoys a substantial degree of self-determination verging on independence in the economic sphere, pursues its international relations in a relatively independent manner, having opened 'representation offices' in over 15 countries). However it acknowledges being associated with the Russian Federation, hence whilst remaining a sovereign state, it forms part of the Russian Federation but is subordinate to its institutions and delegates significant powers to the federal authorities. It is noteworthy that the Azerbaijani authorities have declared their support for the Tatarestan model for settling the NK conflict.⁵⁸¹

This model complies with the Azerbaijani position of offering NK the "highest" degree of autonomy, and also has the advantage of avoiding the use of the term 'autonomy' which, from the Armenian perspective, is tainted by past experiences. Whereas, the main controversy lies in the definition of future relations as 'horizontal' or 'vertical', the associated state model may be

helpful in providing a 'diagonal' type of relationship. Whatever the terms used, it is likely that a future solution will bear some resemblance to the Tatarestan model, while accounting for the specific conditions and circumstances of NK. So, the most probable status for Karabakh includes enjoying the highest degree of autonomy, as implied by the Tatarestan model.

As mentioned before, under an autonomous government and by establishing international relations, the enclosed territory of NK would enjoy real advantages just like other independent states.⁵⁸² However, describing it as ambiguous and unacceptable, one of the authorities of Yerevan declared that none of the world's existing autonomy models can today satisfy NK's requirements, particularly regarding the problem of security.⁵⁸³

Trans-Caucasian Confederation

The idea that the future of the South Caucasus countries lies in their political integration, is not new. But a group of researchers from the Centre for Research of European Politics in Brussels headed by Michael Emerson proposed a very radical version of such an idea, presupposing that integration in itself may turn out to be the key to the solution of both the Karabakh and the other conflicts in this region. This proposal assumes the following elements:

- Readiness of the leaders of the three recognized states of the South Caucasus to immediately take steps towards regional integration and the creation of the so-called South Caucasus Community.

- Consent of the EC, Russia and the USA to sponsor such integration.
- Readiness to realise a plan / agenda of six items, three of which pertain immediately to the South Caucasus, and the rest to collaboration in a wider region, including the Black Sea zone and the south of Russia. The first three items include:
 - I. Constitutional resolutions for international conflicts, in particular, with the use of modern European models of shared sovereignty as well as the inter-dependence of different levels.
 - II. It is proposed for the most important conflicts - NK and Abkhazia - to make provision for a high degree of self-government, exclusive competence, separate constitutions, horizontal and asymmetric relations with state powers, and joint competence in such spheres as security, foreign relations and economy.
 - III. Special articles must be drafted on peace-making and guarantees of security for refugees.

The project also stipulated the possibility of the federalisation of Georgia and Azerbaijan proceeding from their cultural and ethnic characteristics so as to avert conflicts in the regions where national minorities reside. All this was to be followed by concrete measures on the formation of the South Caucasus community, presuming compact political and economic integration of all the states of the region. It also presupposed the active participation of other bodies such as the OSCE, the Russian Federation, the E.U and the USA.⁵⁸⁴

As expected, the plan failed to produce any significant results because of the lack of any real interest among the leaders of the states in the region.

Here we can mention the analogous model of Emil Agayev, called the 'Trans-Caucasian Confederation' or the 'South-Caucasian Union' (SU). According to this notion, his union could include not only first two and then three independent states, but after entering confederate relations they would retain their sovereignty. Under specific terms (stipulated in each separate case), autonomous entities could also be included as associate members. Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ajaria, NK (plus Nakhchivan), would in this case remain subjects of the sovereign republics but would be granted the right to participate on an equal basis in confederate life as a whole. Each of them would receive the right to live as it wished but within certain limits without interfering with the others. All this would be determined by a treaty related to the formation of the Confederation. This treaty should also stipulate that all territorial and other claims must be consigned to the past once and for all, thus making it easier to settle disputes. It would also be easier to return refugees to their origins.

According to Agayev, the formation and functioning of the South Caucasus Union, could be realised with the help and mediation of the world community, otherwise it would be difficult to achieve.⁵⁸⁵

The possibility of the formation of such a confederation could be considered in the context of global tendencies towards integration. The question is:

whether the time for the creation of an integrated (common) political space has come and how to organize the process of controlled, 'predictable' globalization, leaving space for the development of peoples and their cultures.

It can be said that the forming of a new type of confederation of countries, encompassing one region, is a subject worthy of consideration. The South Caucasus and the territories that border it - Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Caspian countries of central Asia and some Black sea countries - are geographically and economically predisposed to integration.⁵⁸⁶

In essence, one more sub-variant of a solution through integration is the model proposed in 1996-98 by the leftist forces of Armenia and NK, supported by the communists of the RF. In this variant, settlement of the conflict could be achieved by joining the internationally recognized and unrecognized states of the South Caucasus to the Belarus-Russian Union (now - the Union state) as a single formation. In 1997, more than one million Armenian signatures were collected in favour of this decision, as the leaders of the Armenian Communist Party and the Armenian People's Initiative Russia-Belarus-Armenia (APIRBA) who held this campaign, claimed. According to some data, the leadership of NK was also predisposed to this idea. However the official rulers of Azerbaijan and Armenia (and Georgia likewise) showed a negative attitude towards it.⁵⁸⁷

The Principle of Condominium (or the Andorra Variant)

After the Key West meeting, publications appeared in the Azerbaijani and Armenian media about another alternative known as the 'Andorra status'. This foresaw having "plenipotentiary representatives" of Azerbaijan and Armenia participating in the NK power structures. It also spoke of other 'attributes' including the establishment of some kind of international control over the 'corridors'.

The basic premise of the idea was that there would be dual rule by Azerbaijan and Armenia over NK. It is possible that this was just a trial balloon to gauge the prevailing opinions in Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK. In reality the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group could hardly have intended to propose such a plan to the sides in dispute or to consider the plan themselves because there are many obstacles to this solution, such as how can the two currencies of Armenia and Azerbaijan – the *dram*, and the *manat* - be circulated together?⁵⁸⁸

The difficulty is that, logically, any 'Andorried' variant of the settlement must be based on a denial of the right of 'new Andorrans' to maintain their own armed forces. And in the case of the 'Andorrisation' of NK or a similar agreement, the USA, the RF and France would have faced the difficult task of fully and unconditionally disarming the army of NK and demilitarising the territories not only of NK, but also of the regions it borders within Armenia and Azerbaijan.

It is unlikely that the Minsk Group is seeking to implement this plan in the region; moreover, it is likely that Azerbaijan and Karabakh will disagree with it.

NK has turned into the 'big independent factor' of Transcaucasian politics. Such a position is indebted to the idea of having a powerful army and thus, it is doubtful whether NK would agree to demilitarise the army.⁵⁸⁹

However, the Andorra solution was explicitly welcomed through the official stance taken by the Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman in 1998.⁵⁹⁰

Conclusion

The lack of progress during the past two decades in resolving the NK conflict and its negative effect on Armenia's internal economy and foreign business has caused public opinion to be somewhat pessimistic and indifferent towards the dispute. Some Armenian parties and political movements blame their economic plight on the NK hostilities. However, the majority of Armenia's political forces are in favour of independence for NK or its unification with Armenia. The Azeris believe that the conflict is firstly the result of Armenian aggression and secondly, that the Armenians are responsible for the creation of hundreds of thousands of Azeri refugees. Thus, it is quite natural that they will maintain their positions if the current conditions are not changed.

Throughout these years, most of the Azerbaijani parties and groups have changed stances and agreed to grant substantial autonomy to NK. In contrast to the Armenians, Azerbaijan's public opinion has not become indifferent. Quite the contrary, it has become increasingly radical and dogmatic towards the NK problem and any impeding solution.

The Armenians of Karabakh consider the right of self-determination as their own unquestionable prerogative and insist on it. Thus, they call for a definition of the political status of NK. Armenia's political, economic, military and even social conditions hold no potential for another war. It is for this reason that the Armenians of Karabakh accept the creation of a confederation as a solution. Due to the political culture, the confederation model is somehow interpreted as independence, but this status is anything but full-blown independence and particularly weaker than their main demand which is unification with Armenia.

On the whole, an analysis of the political and social climate in Azerbaijan, Armenia and NK together with the final stances of the different parties and movements, particularly in NK, suggest that the time is ripe for compromise. Public opinion in Armenia is against another war. The general atmosphere in Azerbaijan, however, allows the rulers to make decisive decisions for it even if this means another war in the region.

As already stated, none of the proposed models for settlement have yet been agreed by the different parties. For instance the 'more than autonomy but not a state' model based on the Aland islands was the most favoured and

practicable solution to Azerbaijani officials, but the Karabakhis did not accept such a proposal at that time as few efforts were made to convince them. The 'Exchange of territories' was the second solution proposed and according to this plan, Armenia would be given a part of NK in return for handing over the territory of Meghri. By this plan Armenia would lose its border with Iran and for this reason the Armenian authorities rejected it.

The 'associated state' variant was another proposal based on which NK would become a legitimate autonomous entity but remain within the structure of an independent Azerbaijan. For this reason, this suggestion was not accepted by the Armenians.

The 'Cyprus model' having at its core the idea that NK would not form part of Azerbaijan or Armenia, nor would it be recognized as an independent state or a member of the international community but would exist and function as an independent state. The Azerbaijani authorities believed that this plan was impracticable.

Delaying the political status or the 'Chechen variant' is another model proposed to solve the NK conflict. According to this model, defining the political status of NK would be delayed for a few years until relations were normalized and the refugees returned to their homes; but according to the Azeris, this model was not suitable for the NK problem.

The 'common state' variant was initiated by the Russian co-chairman of the Minsk Group and suggested the creation of a horizontal relationship between Azerbaijan and NK, but this time too, finding it against their national interests, the Azeris rejected this plan.

The 'Tarestan model' was another proposed solution which implied the setting up of a horizontal relationship between Azerbaijan and NK and of being independent in the sphere of international economic relations. This model was too similar to Azerbaijan's offering NK the highest degree of autonomy, and Karabakhi officials believed that their security problems had not been included and therefore it was not acceptable to them.

According to Michael Emerson the NK conflict was solvable through the forming of a "Trans-Caucasian confederation" which required regional integration of the three Caucasian republics, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia; but this plan too failed to bring any significant results due to the failure to find any interest among the leaders of the regional states.

Emil Agayev proposed a similar model called the "Trans-Caucasian confederation" which included the three independent states. After entering into confederate relations, they would retain their sovereignty and NK, Abkhazia and South Ossetia would in that case remain subjects of the sovereign republics but with the right to participate on an equal basis in confederate life as a whole.

After the meeting in Key West, Florida, another variant named the 'Andorra model' was debated. This required the presence and cooperation of the plenipotentiary representatives of Azerbaijan and Armenia participating in the power structures of NK and controlling the corridors. Disarming the Karabakh army was the essential proviso for implementing this model and this was not agreed by NK or Armenia. Also, the dual governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan had their reservations too. Briefly, none of the proposed models have lived up to anybody's expectations and hence, the outlook for the settlement of the NK conflict is still uncertain.

Chapter 9: The Outlook for a Settlement of the Conflict

Introduction

This chapter comprises two parts. In the first, an outline for solving the NK conflict is presented and in the second, specific solutions by various individuals are suggested for the NK conflict in the context of the observations and findings of some outstanding scholars in resolving international conflicts. In the end, proposals are presented which are founded on past experience and up-to-date knowledge of conflict resolution.

This work thus far has presented the background to the NK conflict and put forward many reasons – legal, historic, geo-political and institutional which have contrived to prolong the conflict. My own solution is one where Track Two diplomacy is used to solve the conflict from the ‘bottom up.’ This solution is unlike any solution which has been put forward before and will be elaborated later in this chapter.

In spite of the efforts made by the Minsk Group mediators, and after 15 years of various ceasefires by the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the NK conflict has remained unsolved. This has halted the economic development of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the region of the Caucasus. Moreover, because of the prolongation of the peace process and the reaching of a deadlock, the NK conflict has become more complicated than ever.

A number of factors have affected the peace process, which have over time become more complex: reasons such as the deepening rancor and hostility between the opposing sides (resulting from the subversive propaganda directed against the politico-social circumstances of both states), a new generation of leadership in both states, the plight of refugees particularly the Azeris who have suffered harsh conditions, the loss of hope for peace, particularly among the Azeris, who were disappointed with the Minsk Group mediators.

Today, there is little hope that direct negotiations between the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia will yield peace. At the present time (September 2009) , the settlement process has reached total deadlock. It can be said that the opposing factions have no inclination to compromise. On the one hand, it is clear that the methods of mediation and the mediators are not going to change and, on the other, if this state of affairs is maintained, the NK conflict will remain shelved and frozen in the coming years. This is not to the benefit of the warring parties and it poses a risk for the general stability of the region.

Moreover, in "no war no peace" conditions, it is not expected that basic problems in the sphere of policy, economy, trade and so on will be resolved, because such issues fall in the shadow of these conditions and remain ambiguous and suspended. Obviously, economic problems and obstacles to development will consequentially produce their effects and threats.

The geo-political and geo-economic importance of the region is indispensable and prompts the great powers to be ready for military confrontation in order to dominate the region. Consequentially, there is a probability that the war will spread both regionally and globally. Thus, the NK conflict presents a risk for the whole Caucasus area.

Since the outbreak of the war, Armenia has received armaments from Russia worth over one billion dollars. If Azerbaijan too receives the same - which is likely because of its oil revenues - a dreadful scenario involving the resumption of the military confrontation between the strengthened rivals is possible. This will certainly have a great effect on other influential regional and wider regional powers, particularly Iran and Turkey, as it had from 1992 to 1994. In other words, the NK conflict has such a potential for disaster that if such a situation should develop, it would return the Caucasus to its 17th and 18th century situation, with more destruction of property and loss of human life.

Moreover, during recent years, the exertion of influence by outsiders on the bilateral relations between the two countries and also their rivalry in the area has gradually paved the way for increased regional polarization. Armenia's alignment with the power axis of Iran, Russia and Greece, against Azerbaijan's association with Turkey and the US (with Israeli tactical support), represent a regional polarization that obstructs the settlement of the dispute. Such a development risks increasing the regional consequences resulting from any change in the present status of the Caucasus area, since increasing

the strategic and geo-economic importance of the region through exploitation and extraction of Caspian oil and gas may have a negative effect on the peace process.

Possible Settlements to the Conflict

Prospects for peace have been bleak but historical experience tells us that no war can remain unsolved forever. This is true especially for the NK conflict situated in an important and sensitive region. If neither side can compromise through direct negotiations or accept the proposals of the mediators, then there may be three possible methods of resolving the situation:

Military Solution

It is evident that the methods used so far, including the mediating attempts made by international organizations and the direct negotiations of the Presidents, have proved fruitless. Therefore, the longer the deadlock, the greater the probability that military operations will resume, because if the settlement of the dispute is postponed, the number of Azerbaijanis who believe such a solution as the only way to resolve this situation, will increase. This is because the Armenians control Karabakh and up to 20 per cent of Azerbaijan, and therefore they have little motivation to start a war.

While the conflicting parties have stressed that they will abide by a peaceful settlement, during recent years several influential political and military figures,

particularly the Azerbaijani President, threatened, in 2004 to resort to military force to restore territorial integrity if the stalemate persisted.⁵⁹¹ Until now, the balance between the military forces of both sides has been the most important obstacle to the resumption of war. Thus, without doubt, hostilities would be inevitable if the balance were to be lost even for a short period during the cease-fire conditions. On 25th May 2005, during the inauguration of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, an Azeri official clearly indicated that a percentage of the proceeds from this project would be invested in the army. The Azeri side, in particular, possesses a necessary and serious motive to trigger the war because, apart from material and spiritual damage, the Armenians insist on benefiting from the outcome of the fighting as they already have the upper hand in the status quo; therefore they want to have more control over the negotiation process, and this has in fact increased their determination.

In justifying their war-like attitude, the Azeris ask to what extent would the Armenians abide by the peaceful settlement of the conflict if Azerbaijan attacked Armenia, occupied its territory and asked for the independence of the Azeris residing in that country? Such beliefs have led to an increase in those who believe in a militarily liberation of the occupied territories. It is noteworthy that according to sociological research carried out in 2002 by the European Commission, 32 per cent of Azeris believed that the resumption of military operations was probable in the NK situation; while in Armenia, the figure stood at just 16.6 per cent. Thus, it is quite clear that a re-ignition of the military conflict largely depends on the Azeris.⁵⁹²

Today, the military solution is not the only one considered as a final though probable solution. This has, unfortunately, become more likely because of a neglect of the peace process and an increasing sense of hopelessness among the Azeris. Similar examples in the region amount to between 14 and 20 cases, such as Chechnia, Abkhazia, Karabakh and also clashes in other areas such as Kosovo, Spain (in the Basque country) China (in the west regarding the Moslems), the Philippines, Indonesia, France, Northern Ireland, Moldavia, Cyprus, Turkey with Kurdistan, Algeria with Morocco, and it can be said that all these conflicts have involved military intervention.⁵⁹³ Thus, the world has not witnessed any disagreement like the one in NK which has been settled peacefully.

However, the enormous investments in the region, especially in the oil industry projects in Azerbaijan and the construction of the Caspian oil and gas pipelines (in Baku-Ceyhan and Baku-Nurusisk) are the main obstacles mitigating against the resumption of military operations.

Foreign Compulsion to Impose a Solution

A coercive peace imposed by global powers may be another possible solution to the conflict. Examples of this idea are found in the war between the Serbs and Croats and the Moslems in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Presidents of the three sides were forced to sign a peace treaty under pressure from the United States. Another example of coercive peace carried out in similar circumstances was the Aland Islands conflict between Swedish nationals and

Finland. At that time, the peace solution was in fact imposed on the opposing sides by the international community. Because neither Finland nor Sweden was satisfied with the peace plan they were forced into agreeing with it and the conflict was duly settled.

Since the NK conflict is taking place in a highly strategic geo-political area, it is highly probable that if Armenia and Azerbaijan fail to find an acceptable solution, the global powers will present them with this answer. Of course, in the NK conflict, the coercive solution will turn out to be the same as previous ones or a combination of them. Most observers believe that the settlement of the NK dispute depends more on external actors rather than the parties at odds with each other. However, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the belligerents had this solution imposed on them by the USSR in the early years of the last century, and even Moscow was unable to stifle hostilities using this solution over a period of 70 years.

In the Balkan conflict too, the Dayton coercive peace process proved authentic and indispensable to the warring parties. Since the coercive solution was to the detriment of the Armenians, they regarded themselves as the victims of a conspiracy orchestrated by the Russians and Turks, so they are more worried about this solution than the Azerbaijanis. In his noted article "War and Peace," Ter-Petrossian, the ousted Armenian President, approvingly pointed this factor out.⁵⁹⁴

Therefore, coercive peace imposed by neutral mediators may be a possible solution for the settlement of the NK conflict. But, the vital question is which power will be able to enforce this coercive peace on the combatants? This question is related to the future rivalry of the powers in the Caucasus region.⁵⁹⁵

Political and peaceful solution

The third option is a political solution to the conflict, achieved through negotiation. It is evident that this solution requires both sides to be ready for huge concessions. Under present conditions and with regard to the positions of both sides, reaching such compromises seems a distant dream (particularly in Azerbaijan and NK), but it is not an altogether improbable or impossible event.

The political and peaceful solution to the NK problem can be achieved in two ways: first, a settlement proposed by international mediators like the OSCE or the UN; and secondly, a solution to be achieved through direct meetings of the Presidents. It is noteworthy that at the beginning of hostilities, in both the Azeri and Armenian communities, there were some factions who agreed to relinquish NK for the benefit of the opposite side and this solution was regarded as a peaceful one, but today it can be seen that these forces have seriously lost ground in both states, so this option seems improbable (For example, *Nor Oghi* was an Armenian party which was in favour of the restoration of NK to Azerbaijan). *Nor Oghi* means the "right path."⁵⁹⁶

Proposals for the Settlement of the NK conflict

It is necessary to consider the past, present and future events in order to discover a solution to this frozen conflict. Being informed of the historical roots of the conflict and trying to mitigate them is the most basic but difficult step in solving the problem, which is only possible through a gradual and peaceful process. Another important measure is to examine the reasons for the failure of the mediators, and for the ineffectiveness of the proposed peace plans, as well as having a precise understanding of the present position of the relevant parties, regionally and further afield. It is quite clear that it is impossible to find a formula to solve such a prolonged dispute without being aware of and putting into practice up-to-date scientific findings in mediation, conflict solving and conflict resolution.

Thus before presenting a proposal for resolving the crisis, it is appropriate to examine a variety of specific peace plans expounded by senior figures. The suggested peace proposal presented later in this chapter is critically informed by these previous events. It is also necessary to be aware of the theoretical comments and empirical experiences of academics in the field of security studies and conflict resolution. Even though none of the scholars discussed have directly touched on the NK conflict in their writings, their work in the field is generally of great value.

Proposals for Peace: Historic Peace Plans

It is noteworthy that one of the first peace plans proposed was by John Maersca, the former US former ambassador to the OSCE and a former special negotiator in the NK crisis. He presented his plan in July 1994 and the key points are as follows:⁵⁹⁷

- NK to be reconstituted as the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (RNK), a self-governing legal entity within and freely associated with the sovereign Republic of Azerbaijan. Nagorno Karabakh would exchange missions with Baku and they would have the right to establish their own missions there and in Stepanakert. In addition, the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh would have the right to limited permanent missions in capitals such as Yerevan and Moscow and in return these states would be allowed to have permanent missions in Stepanakert.
- The Azeris residing in NK would have the right to elect their own representatives in the NK parliament according to the size of their population. The Armenians living in Azerbaijan and outside of NK would enjoy the rights of minorities according to law. NK would gradually reduce its army and would only be permitted to have a local security guard but not assault forces in NK. Azerbaijan would only deploy local security forces in NK but not offensive armaments in its vicinity.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan would sign an agreement according to which both would have the right to land as well as air transit and access to the defined territories. Armenia would enjoy land transit through the Lachin Corridor in Azerbaijan and, in return, the latter would have access to

Nakhichevan through Armenian territory along the Arax River. All kinds of transport and the right to transfer energy and build pipelines would be subject to this agreement. All these transit regions would be under international supervision.

- Refugees and displaced persons created as a result of the crisis would return to their homes. Some villages in NK which belonged to the Azeris in 1988 and those in Azerbaijan belonging to Armenians, along with Shusha where the population was mixed, would be internationally supervised.
- The whole of Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK would be a free trade area.
- After the articles of the peace treaty were signed, they would have to be approved by the parliaments of NK and Azerbaijan. The articles which included transit through the special zones would be signed by representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan. And finally the agreement would be signed by the Minsk group and submitted to the UN Secretary General to be distributed to the governments
- The US would appoint a high-ranking mission in order to support the items of the proposal and take a leading role in the financial affairs and establishment of the lines of communication between Armenia and NK as well as Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan.
- The UN and OSCE would hold a conference with the cooperation of international financial organizations, and support from the donor countries would attract economic resources to restore Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK. They would be committed to investments and the carrying out of these programmes.

The following year, John Maersca pointing to the Azerbaijan oil pipeline, called it the "peace pipeline" and stressed that if Azerbaijan ignored its passage through Armenia and Nakhichevan to Turkey, it would lose the sole opportunity to end the conflict.⁵⁹⁸

To sum up Maersca's proposals, it is fair to say that they are dependant on mutual trust, which currently does not exist among the conflict parties. It is unrealistic to expect Armenians and Azeris to coexist in harmony in the present circumstances and because of this unrealistic assumption this proposal has failed to gain popularity.

The most famous peace plan after John Maersca's proposal was tabled by Michael Emerson, former EU Ambassador to the Soviet Union and subsequently to the Russian Federation. In 2000, he presented his solution, entitled the "Caucasus Stability Pact."⁵⁹⁹

To compare Maersca's and Emerson's proposals, it can be said that Emerson's plan suggests that the Balkans and the South Caucasus are both beset by the difficulties associated with post-communist transition and the associated problems surrounding ethnicity. However, the Balkans are in Europe, whereas the South Caucasus is on the edge of the continent. Even if Europe becomes more involved in the South Caucasus, it will remain only one of a number of interested parties, including large regional states such as Russia and Turkey, pointing out the need for a Caucasus Stability Pact. Emerson uses the term "stability pact" as a loose, generic shorthand for a

comprehensive, regional and multilateral initiative to bring peace to a region beset by ethnic conflict. Emerson's proposal is based on regional co-operation while Maersca's is more of a personal plan for a political settlement of the conflict.

This recommendation was presented with a similar formula used for Balkan statehood, namely, a regional, multilateral, multi-sect initiative to bring peace and cooperation to the region. The measure had been proposed at political level by Suleiman Demirel, the president of Turkey, around the time of the OSCE summit in Istanbul in November 1999 - the first instance of an OSCE meeting in the Turkish capital. It was supported by the presidents of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. They spoke about the need for the formation of a regional security system for the Caucasus.

In this respect, many formulae were presented and finally the formula 3+3+2 (The three Caucasian states, plus the three neighbouring states of Turkey, Russia, and Iran, plus the two great external powers: the European Union and the United States) prevailed and was accepted. The next year, Michael Emerson proposed a formula of 3+3+3+2 and added the three separatist units in the Caucasus: NK, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The main features of his plan were:

- It included six phases in two separate sections. The first section was directly related to the Caucasus and the second was based on the cooperation among other territories of the region, including that between

the areas of the Black and Caspian Seas and the Caucasus. Considering the numerous existing tribes and the ethnic diversity and demarcations in the Caucasus and its potential for new misunderstandings, Emerson aimed at solving the present disputes and, at the same time, preventing any conflict emerging in the future, through a coalition of the three Caucasian states and the cooperation of the European Union.

- In order to solve the problem of NK and Abkhazia, he proposed the formation of a confederation between these two and Azerbaijan and Georgia, whereby the power structure would be horizontal and the relations between NK and Armenia would be asymmetrical. Thus, the refugees and displaced persons would be able to return to the Azeri-occupied provinces and also to southern Abkhazia.
- Another plan of his was the formation of new order of regional security, through which responsibility for the supervision and implementation of the peace plan would be entrusted for a limited period to the military units of the OSCE members. In this last phase of his plan, Emerson proposed the setting up of an organization called the Trans-Caucasus Society. The responsibilities of this organization would be to eliminate the existing demarcations, to establish a free-trading zone, to facilitate public businesses, cooperation in transportation and the creation of energy networks. Along with the three Caucasian states, this organization would play a decisive role regarding the competence of the autonomous units (NK, Abkhazia, and Ossetia).⁶⁰⁰ The USA, the EU and Turkey did not object to this approach, even taking a number of measures for the initiation of corresponding discussions. However, the Russian Federation

and Iran were against this formula, and favoured the “3+2.” The approaches to integration were intensively discussed at international conferences in Bohum and Berlin (Germany) in 2001, with the participation of the representatives of all sides of the South Caucasus. In this conference Emerson presented his idea. These authors did not receive the support of politicians in any country or any international organisations.

Another relatively important peace plan was proposed in 1998 by Professor Armen Aivazian, an Armenian historian and political scientist which included three inter-related political, military and legal agreements. The most important points of the three agreements were as follows⁶⁰¹:

- Through signing a trilateral military agreement, Armenia, Russia and the United States will guarantee the strategic security of Armenia for a long time. It is implicitly mentioned in the agreement that any kind of attack against Armenia is considered an attack on the United States and Russia and according to the UN Charter, Article 51, these states have the right to punish the aggressor. He specifies that any other text except this will be a null and misleading promise and that this agreement must be permanent.
- Armenia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan will sign a trilateral agreement concerning the recognition of territorial integrity.
- NK will be called the Armenian Republic of Nagorno Karabakh and be recognized by Armenia as an Azerbaijani confederacy. The relations

between the Armenian Republic of NK and Azerbaijan will be horizontal and according to the confederative principles.

- Through a quadrilateral agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and the United States, Armenia will be entrusted with the guaranteeing of the security of the Armenian Republic of NK.
- The Armenian republic of NK will keep separate military forces, to be called the national guard of NK. In times of peace, the number of soldiers will be 25,000 - the same number as the present army.
- NK military forces will withdraw from six Azerbaijani regions and the Azeri army too will evacuate some parts of Karabakh and its neighbouring areas and withdraw to a distance of 20 to 30 kilometres. These regions will be supervised by the OSCE or UN forces for an unlimited time.
- Nagorno Karabakh will have the right to have a government, flag, emblem and army.
- Azeri citizens, or at least the Azeris who will reside in NK, will enjoy double citizenship.
- NK itself will define its level of economic and trade relations with Azerbaijan, and will cooperate with the Azerbaijan central bank.
- Stepanakert-Baku cooperation and coordination in foreign, defence, security and legal policies will be defined through negotiations.
- The return of the refugees will be postponed to the time when the entire agreement on all articles has been achieved.

Another solution was put forward in 2005 by Tabib Husseinov, a researcher and expert on ethno-territorial conflicts. He believes that this conflict should be solved through "power-sharing and regional integration."⁶⁰²

He has analyzed and studied the position taken by the Armenian parliament, which can be summarized according to three principles:

- NK shall not be under the control of the Azeri government.
- A permanent land communication between NK and Armenia will be set up and Armenia shall have the right to military interference if necessary; and
- International guarantees for the security of the Karabakhis⁶⁰³.

A study of Azerbaijan's position, called the "Nagorno Karabakh Charter", or the "Charter of Four" proposed four important principles to solve the conflict: (i) Armenian withdrawal from the occupied regions; (ii) the keeping of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity; (iii) the safe return of the refugees and homeless to their homes; and (iv) the granting of autonomy to both Armenian and Azeri societies. Should this solution be rejected, Azerbaijan would have the right to use military force to solve the problem (according to international rights and the UN Charter).⁶⁰⁴ He came to the conclusion that there were common grounds for both positions and that the conflict could be solved through "power-sharing". So, he suggested granting autonomy to the Karabakhis with each part or province administered jointly by Armenians and Azeris.

It is important to point out that none of the plans described above were legally binding. They were simply proposed solutions.

But this solution will definitely face problems, since if the Azeris return to their homes, mainly in the two strategic cities of Shush and Lachin which were formerly populated mainly by Azeris, how could they allow these regions to be administered jointly with the Armenians? This is true in places where the Armenians constitute the majority of the population. Besides, in the first phase of this peace plan they have no intention of living among the peoples of the other side. Thus, from the point of view of NK's geographical features, this solution will cause acute security problems in these regions.

Such a defeat of the "power-sharing" solution leads us to an important truth, that the NK problem cannot be solved at the intergovernmental level alone when the specifics of the peace plans, the nature of the NK conflict and the basic demands of the parties in dispute are taken into account. Thus, a combination of some intra-state (decentralization and power-sharing), inter-state and super-state measures are necessary to achieve a stable and just peace in the region.

Therefore, he proposed regional integration and then integration of the region with Europe. He believed that regional integration would pave the way for establishing peace in the region and at the next stage the European political and social structures would be responsible for developing it.

Briefly, the above-mentioned peace plans, along with the proposals presented by the Minsk group mediators, have been the most important ones to date for solving the NK conflict. They have not, of course, been effective. It is only natural that a rejection of the solutions proposed by John Maresca, Michael Emerson and Armen Eivazian should have their own particular reasons, in a similar way to those for the failure of the proposals presented by the Minsk Group mediators, discussed earlier

This chapter will now briefly but critically discuss the afore-mentioned settlements. One of the main reasons for the failure of peace plans in general and the proposals of Maresca and Emerson in particular, is that they paid no attention to the interests and concerns of the neighbouring powers in the warring region. It is reasonable to suggest that if the NK conflict is solved according to a formula which puts the interests or the national security of an influential power at risk, the plan will not provide peace and stability in the region in the long term. For instance, John Maresca presents the United States as the only guarantor of the peace treaty and no role has been entrusted to other states in the region or the world. Russia too has been eliminated from the plan.

The best example, to show the neglect of the interests and security considerations of the neighbouring powers is to be found in the proposal for the "exchange of territories" presented as a settlement for the NK conflict. It is clear that in this plan, Russia and Iran would be separated from the region, and the north-south corridor would be completely removed. Moreover, the

buffer zone between Europe and central Asia would face difficulties. In other words, the political, economic and security interests of Russia and Iran as well as those of Europe and central Asia would be put at risk. Even China would encounter security problems. The introduction of this proposal would only provide for the interests of Turkey and its pan-Turkic and pan-Turanian policies. Turkey would gain direct access not only to central Asia but even to China. Moreover, this plan would be to the detriment of the opposing parties, especially Armenia, because it would be surrounded by Turkish extremists and its own historical enemies.

Unfortunately, in Mareskas proposal too, the fulfilment of his country's interests and strategic goals is clearly the main motivator. In his peace plan; he has not envisaged the slightest involvement of other powerful regional outsiders like Russia and Iran. Thus, it is simple-minded to suggest that no role would be contemplated for these nations in a region which has formed part of their territories for a very long time. To show how simplistic Maerskas's idea is, it is sufficient to point out that the conflicting parties did not pay any attention to his suggestions, because it is impossible to establish peace in the region without bearing in mind the interests of these other powerful nations.

The same criticism can also be levelled at Michael Emerson's plan. He too has not considered any role for a regional actor like Iran and has ignored the decisive part played by the regional powers in the affairs of the Caucasus.

It is of some significance that the positive reaction of the Armenian government and its President to this proposal was because they shared the same view. Kocharian explicitly stated that Russia and Iran should not be sidelined in the peace process and that their cooperation and participation were necessary for any peace plan.⁶⁰⁵

It should be explained that Emerson considers that the first and most necessary element for creating stability in the Caucasus is the settlement of the various ongoing conflicts in the region. He proposes the creation of a Trans-Caucasus Pact and considers that it would be possible to solve the NK, Abkhazia and south Ossetia problem within the framework of such an organization; but this requires that the governments of the three Caucasus states should be ready to unite and form a coalition. On the one hand, the authorities are not able to make such a decision without the support of public opinion. Thus, as a first step, the governments should prepare the mood within the country. This would appear to be extremely difficult, because the numerous communities living in the Caucasus have been subjected to intense propaganda for a long time and Russian security agencies have stamped on any escalation of opposition and difference. Thus, to unify the Caucasian groups necessitates laying foundations and developing the culture by introducing at least a short or middle-term programme, which is complicated.

In commenting on Aivazian's plan, one should note that an elementary knowledge of Caucasian history is sufficient to understand that integration in

the Caucasus area and the agreeing on a treaty among the three states of the region is not a plan that can be easily implemented. Despite the fact that influential powers have been in some way involved in his peace plan, he made a mistake in his evaluation of their degree of influence by presuming that the US and Russia were the only important and effective powers in the settlement of the dispute. Fearing and feeling abhorrence towards the old enemy caused Aivazian to avoid involving Turkey in the peace process and limiting that country's participation. Moreover, the role of Europe and Iran is ambiguous, in spite of their standing. His proposal favours and strengthens Armenia.

Hosseinov's suggestion has positive features but the main point is that the Caucasus should join the EU, which does not seem practical for a variety of reasons.

As understood from the content of the proposals, none of the peace initiators have paid any attention to the internal factors of the conflict in Azerbaijan and Armenia and have had no policy ideas to eliminate these important considerations. This has limited the political leaders to compromise.

As an Armenian, Aivazian has ignored the Azeris' historical mind-set and deep feelings towards the Armenians and Karabakhis. He has put forward a unilateral plan, which is to the benefit of the Armenians and he expects to be able to stabilize the peace treaty with the support and guarantees of outsiders. But a stable peace will be achieved when it is organized according

to a mutual and fair compromise. In such a case there would be no need for foreign guarantees and for distant powers to interfere in the region. On the contrary, if the said principles are not observed and even if the world community is united to support and guarantee the plan, it cannot be considered permanent. Either way the situation will become more fraught if no resolution is found.

Reviewing the Opinions of Conflict Resolution Scholars

In the past two decades or so, the emergence of many international conflicts and the greater complexity and duration of peace processes, occasioned by an increase in powerful internal and external factors, have gradually convinced theorists in conflict resolution and security studies that traditional methods of mediation are no longer viable. They believe that new methods, appropriate to this change need be implemented. Fortunately, in recent times, new approaches to conflict resolution have been developed. A combination of traditional diplomatic techniques and unofficial methods are effective when used together

Since 1960, scholars have introduced various initiatives and methods for increasing mutual understanding between adversaries to gain a better insight into conflict resolution. In this respect, the most influential figures to propose new ideas and contributions include John Burton (controlled communication for analytical problem solving); Leonard Doob (human relations workshops applied to conflict resolution); Herbert Kelman (interactive problem-solving);

and Edward Azar (protracted social conflict); not to mention the problem-solving forums of all these figures. Because of the limited success in resolving violent conflicts, these scholar-practitioners have developed new ideas such as problem-solving workshops as a non-official third-party strategy. These study groups aim to bring together representatives of the warring factions and to facilitate creative problem-solving through “direct communication” and in-depth conflict analysis. Burton defines “direct communication” as “an attempt to raise the level of communication to transform competitive and conflicting relationships into ones in which common values are being sought.”⁶⁰⁶

Using this method, attempts are made to address the identity and security needs of the parties in dispute, on the assumption that conflicts arise out of unsatisfied human demands. This approach is an academically-based, unofficial third-party intervention to resolve conflicts, which brings together political and influential representatives of the adversaries to engage in direct dialogue under the supervision of a social scientist. Their proposals and solutions are briefly analysed.

Burton was one of the first figures to examine this idea. With the co-operation of his assistants, he started important research into the settlement of several conflicts in the 1960s.⁶⁰⁷ Together with his colleagues, Burton created a new concept known as "interactive conflict resolution" and successfully tested it in the Malaysia-Indonesia conflict. He achieved success in resolving the dispute, and also an affirmation of his belief in this new paradigm. In contrast

to the realist and traditional approach to international relations whereby a conflict could be resolved by resorting to force, suppression or compromise, Burton developed his thinking about a new “pluralist” paradigm which emphasized the values and relations of multiple actors in the global system.

With the acquiescence of the then British prime minister, Harold Wilson, who had tried unsuccessfully to mediate the conflict, Burton sent letters of invitation to the governments concerned, asking them to send delegates for discussions in London. In December 1965, a five-day meeting was held with the representatives of the opposing parties and a panel of ten social scientists from different universities, to test the interactive conflict resolution in a peaceful atmosphere. Relevant subjects such as the roots and historical causes, and the viewpoints of each party were analyzed, together with an academic board, known as the "facilitators", who played a considerable role in the meetings. Finally, a solution close to the viewpoints of both sides was accepted and the peace treaty was prepared according to the results and resumés of the London meeting. Thinking about this new approach to conflict analysis and resolution, Burton described it as a decisive paradigm shift

Leonard Doob, a professor of psychology and a close colleague of Burton recommended a different approach to solving international conflicts. As part of the “Yale group” he used psychological principles to help people learn how to promote peace in conflicts. The Yale group launched its attempts to solve the dispute among Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia in circumstances when the

mediating attempts of the Organization for African Unity and the UN were unsuccessful and produced no results.

In their theory, Doob and his colleagues believed in using social science as a tool to solve disputes and were convinced that for real progress to be made during a period of intensive hostility between the two sides, it would be necessary for some outside figures to intervene in their conflict resolution workshops. The Yale group also believed that a human relations training workshop would be an appropriate form for interposing in conflicts. It can be said that Dobb's workshops were totally different from Burton's both methodologically and structurally. The workshops Burton proposed were based on open and unstructured seminar discussion to analyze the sources and the process of the conflict.⁶⁰⁸

Generally speaking, the Yale group was not successful in the settlement of disputes because they faced numerous practical difficulties in organizing their workshops. They even faced budget problems for their research and for holding meetings, which is shown for example by their attempts at resolving the Ethiopian, Kenyan and Somalian conflicts and the Northern Ireland strife.

As mentioned before, Doob fully considered social science and training in human relations as the most effective tools for intervention in the disputes. However, his workshops were not very successful in comparison with Burton's. Although one of the problems in organizing them was a lack of

powerful and influential sponsors, it seems that the main reasons for their failure was the nature of the workshops themselves and their proposals.

Herbert Kelman from America, the founder of the programme on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard held over thirty workshops to address the Israeli-Palestinian strife. He was another of Burton's colleagues and an activist in the CAC who has spent more than thirty years articulating and elaborating the conceptual rationale of the problem-solving workshop. The work of Kelman on interactive problem-solving encompasses a comprehensive blend of theory, research and practice in applied social science. In collaboration with Stephen Cohen, Kelman created the integrated conceptual rationale rooted in approved principles of social behaviour.⁶⁰⁹

In his comparison of Burton and Doob, Kelman noted several commonalities between the two, including the prestigious yet unofficial participants, such as writers, journalists, academics, and former officials – all influential figures within their communities. He also pointed out commonalities such as the facilitative role of the third party, the informal atmosphere, the relatively unstructured agenda and the use of isolated settings. The typical workshop brings together unofficial representatives of conflicting parties in a relatively secluded and preferably academic setting to engage in face-to-face communication with the guidance of social scientists that are knowledgeable about conflict theory, group processes and the region in question. All these elements were considered by Kelman and Cohen in designing the basis of the workshop to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a seminar held to

seek solutions to hostilities, Kelman operated with and argued for an ethnically balanced and neutral team as the third party. Thus, he sought Arab collaborators to balance his own Jewish identity on the third party panel.

Generally, Kelman's problem-solving workshop had the dual purpose of being both "educational"- producing changes in the perceptions, attitudes, and ideas held by the individual participants - and "political": transferring these changes to the political dialogue and decision-making in each community.

Kelman saw the problem-solving workshop as a uniquely social-psychological approach to conflict resolution in that social interaction, which is at the heart of the evolution and resolution of conflict, is the central focus and unique level of analysis of social psychology. He believed that international conflict is not seen as mere disagreement between states, but as conflict between societies, thus underscoring the importance of psychological and cultural factors in the analysis, along with military and strategic ones. Unique assumptions in the processes and structure of the conflict-solving workshop are set out in the basic principles of the social-psychological approach. Finally, the substantive content of workshops is informed by assumptions about the importance of human needs and perceptual constraints, and influences processes in situations of conflict.

From 1971, Kelman and his associates held numerous workshops on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with increasingly influential participants. Within the

context of their action research programme on the Middle East, Kelman and his colleagues have engaged in many visits, meetings and conversations with opinion leaders, decision-makers and policy advisers. Throughout his involvement, Kelman increasingly came to see the Israeli-Palestinian issue as lying at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

According to Kelman, the core element of the dissention between the nationalist movements was the mutual denial of the adversary's national identity. In the late 1970s, there were no indications of either Israeli or Palestinian readiness to offer acceptance to the other side, thus the peace process reached a deadlock. The way out, according to Kelman, was to work towards the psychological prerequisites for mutual acceptance, which required complementary and reciprocal actions by the two parties. Kelman carried his analysis further by proposing that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were possible in a framework of mutual recognition in which acknowledgement of the other's rights represents the assertion rather than the abandonment of one's own rights.⁶¹⁰

According to Kelman and his colleagues, a lasting settlement of the conflict would be possible when it is responsive to the needs and fears of the two conflicting parties. Meeting human basic needs is the main criterion of a satisfactory solution, according to Kelman and his colleagues, and it was therefore essential to understand the two perspectives and to confront the differences between them.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kelman et al showed that although the workshops cannot become a substitute for official diplomacy, the results of such workshops can be beneficial in all the processes of the negotiations. Also the workshops and the relative measures can gradually help to build up trust once again in the negotiations. As in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kelman focused on the process of renegotiation to help create an appropriate climate for negotiations and to set principles as bases for it.⁶¹¹

Edward Azar is another expert in conflict settlement. During the 1980s, he held workshops to address the dispute between Argentina and the U.K. over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, the Lebanese civil war, and the fighting in Sri Lanka. In his approach, Azar was able to assess the degree of hostility versus friendliness in interactions and to track the frequency and nature of violent conflict in the world, over time. Azar's analyses of international conflict indicated that since World War Two, almost all conflicts have occurred in the Third World, and many were ethnic rather than strategic. In the Cold War era, the interference of the US and the USSR aggravated the situation. These results convinced Azar that a shift in focus in international relations was necessary, from a "superpower bias" towards these countries.

This realization, clearly ahead of its time, led Azar to coin the term "protracted social conflict" (PSC), and to develop a model that captured the reality of the most violent and apparently intractable conflicts in the world. He defined protracted social conflicts as "hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in

frequency and intensity".⁶¹² Proposing that security and stability are linked to human dignity, quality of life, and true peace, rather than to military power and the threat of force, Azar thus sought to change the approach of international relations from strategic to humanistic.

In those conditions where social scientists analyze conflicts and discover the power dynamics in the area of international interactive relations, they present solutions which are generally favourable to the superpower nations. Azar and his colleagues believed that the internal and social characteristics of the conflict must be considered in their internal aspect. In his studies of international conflicts, he deduced that ninety per cent of the conflicts had occurred in the Third World and that the mediation of the superpowers in most cases had been unsuccessful up until 1970. He concluded that mediations exerted on the basis of superpower solutions were largely ineffective.

Azar noted that the role of the facilitators is the main asset in problem-solving workshops. He believed that such workshops allowed the parties to assess their immediate complaints and goals and make a distinction between their needs and interests. Recognition of needs paves the way for future negotiations and the reaching of an effective agreement. Azar placed the problem-solving approach firmly in the domain of "Track Two diplomacy", which involves unofficial efforts in the promotion of peaceful relations between warring parties. He acknowledged the seminal contributions of Burton, Doob, and Kelman, and adopted the term "third party consultation".

He then placed the use of workshops within a four-step process for the management of protracted social conflicts which included:

- 1) Tracking the conflict
- 2) Facilitating breakthroughs through workshops,
- 3) Promoting structural development within the society, and
- 4) Adopting development diplomacy to alleviate external barriers to resolution.

Azar coined the term “problem-solving forum” to denote his model of the workshop approach. He emphasized the importance of creating the proper environment in which representatives of the parties can analyze their identity-related needs through effective communication leading to the mutual discovery of breakthroughs. Thus, each party must come to recognize the legitimate needs and aspirations of the other, the third party providing impartial facilitation. Azar considers the panel of facilitators as an integral element of the forum model.⁶¹³

Azar outlined the steps of structural development and development diplomacy that must flow from and complement the forum process to resolve PSCS. Although problem-solving forums are necessary to achieve short-term breakthroughs, fundamental goals can be achieved only through long-term economic growth and sociopolitical reforms that include consensus building within and between communities. He believed that PSCS can not be managed or resolved without addressing the issues of economic

development and communal pluralism. Thus studying protracted social conflict led Azar to conclude that "peace is development in the broadest sense of the term."⁶¹⁴

A Proposed Solution to the NK Conflict

The proposed solution stems partly from the author's experience as a diplomat in the Caucasus region. What follows is a proposal which if carefully put into effect may enable lasting progress to be made.

It can be concluded from the comments and lessons learnt from scholars that potentially workshops can affect the process of conflict-solving in two ways: firstly, by organizing and passing on the new ideas and results from the negotiations of the participants to the officials and those in senior positions on both sides of the conflict; and to important circles of society; and secondly, by introducing a third party to the issues surrounding the conflict in order to influence both parties and bring them closer together. Moreover, the initiatives of all four scholars discussed: Burton's interactive conflict resolution, Doob's human relations training workshop, Kelman's social-psychological unofficial interactions and Azar's problem-solving forum, are basically indirect social-psychological interventions in which changes are transferred from the individual to the community, thereby affecting political trends on a broader scale.

Since these scholars have achieved some positive results in testing their theories in their case studies, it can be said that unofficial social-psychological interaction can have a relatively important impact on negotiations, mutual recognition and the process of conflict settlement in general. Thus, Burton, Kelman, Doob and Azar deduced relatively important principles and concepts, all of which are necessary for solving complicated and protracted disputes.

As mentioned before, the NK question is a complex, drawn-out struggle taking place in a sensitive geo-political and geo-economic region. On the one hand, the political and military importance of the Caucasus cannot be abandoned by the regional and global powers, and on the other, this conflict is happening in close proximity to important energy projects and has the potential to impact significantly on the global economy.

Also, the differences between the Azeri and Armenian nations and culture are significant and the collective consciousness of people on both sides are littered with bad experiences and failed efforts to achieve a lasting peace. The NK dispute is not about territory but about the cultural values of the two nations. Thus, because of these problems, if the authorities of either side compromise on these issues it will, as a consequence, result in an internal crisis and the loss of power.

Perhaps the most important reason for the failure of the Minsk Group lies here. In the 15 years of negotiations, the mediators - the US, Russia and

France - were only in contact with the leaders of the conflicting factions. In particular, all of these activities and proposals were confidential, meaning that these secret negotiations without transparency were unlikely to produce peace because there was no public input and feedback. Although members of the Minsk Group have not used any psychological strategy in spite of its great strength, it can be said that peace-making policies which are based on unofficial social-psychological interaction can be effective in the solving of the NK conflict because the people of both sides have the opportunity to be engaged in peace-building.

Also, despite the theories of the above-mentioned researchers, the cooperation of unofficial movements must be counted not only as part of the official and diplomatic processes but should also be accorded greater priority and attention, and if they are replaced by official diplomacy from the beginning, they can play a role as initiators of the negotiations. Problem-solving workshops do not offer a total solution. They are inputs into the settlement. Also, these workshops are not alternatives to a political approach and negotiations but merely a supplement to them. As has been indicated, the workshops should be sponsored by academic bodies independent of governmental organizations.

It can be said that during the past 15 years when only official authorities and diplomatic organizations have been involved in the NK peace process, there has been little noticeable progress or convergence between the two sides. Because of the psychological warfare of both governments, the younger

generations in particular, feel even greater animosity towards the other side than their parents. This is patently obvious among the new Azeri generation. Thus, the beliefs of the afore-mentioned scholars regarding the need to follow the problem-solving workshop solutions of official diplomats have never been effective in the NK dispute and the efforts which have been described earlier for conflict settlement have not resulted in any progress.

In addition to the points which have been discussed above, neither side possesses the political resources to impose a solution by themselves. There is no national consensus for compromise among the parties to the conflict. There are no trump cards the leaders can play or any plan for a peace agreement. Secret negotiations have been one of the main obstacles to a resolution because transparency and the support of the people are necessary for any concessions by the leaders. Moreover, the people have not been engaged in the peace process and they are considered strangers to the negotiations. Thus, at the present time, it has been shown that the Track One approach will not resolve the conflict on its own.

By using the experience of scholars - which is the key response to the obstacles in this conflict - and discussions by representatives of both parties at unofficial meetings with skilled facilitators and scholar-practitioners in interactive conflict resolution, this problem has a greater chance of being settled.

Burton was one such diplomat who became dissatisfied with traditional diplomacy. His novel approach in the field of international relations from the creation of controlled communication to interactive conflict resolution, was successful because, as a diplomat, he understood the difficulties of dealing with official negotiations and that is why when he became an academic he was able to propose new and successful ideas for conflict resolution. He was able to aid the settlement of the conflicts in Malaysia and Indonesia after the failure of official mediation because he used his previous contacts as an Australian diplomat to send letters to the parties concerned asking them to nominate representatives for an academic analysis of the dispute.

It is clear that their unofficial solutions, especially the “problem-solving workshops” and the presence of a third party - in other words, the art of Track Two diplomacy - would be the best way of tackling the obstacles to the Karabakh problem and helping settle the predicament.

The enhancement of the role of popular communities in solving the dispute is another reason proving that indirect social-psychological solutions are useful. As was seen, in the Paris and Key West talks, both the Armenian and Azeri authorities came close to an agreement on a particular formula for solving the differences, but internal opposition, especially from Azerbaijan caused the negotiations to fail.

Since a lack of mutual trust is one of the main obstacles in the NK peace process, problem-solving workshops, especially third party workshops would

be useful in renewing confidence in the negotiations. Such workshops are needed in order to solve the NK crisis.

Another factor for advocating the usage of Track Two diplomacy is that the belligerents are able to negotiate different solutions to the conflict merely through discussion without being worried about political reactions, and also enjoy the benefit of political interaction without any risk. In practice, none of the decision-making participants can arrange greater flexibility in the workshops than the officials and decision-makers. They can even deny their participation in case of failure.

As presented and discussed, each of the four researchers offer different proposals for the arrangement of the members participating in the problem-solving and third-party workshops. Because of the deep animosity and differences of opinion between the protagonists as well as numerous other influential factors, the NK dispute is different from the conflicts which have been studied by these scholars, so it is suggested that the ideas of all four should be used in the arrangement of the participants in the different workshops. Of course it should be emphasised that a careful analysis of the parties and issues are a priority in this approach.

With regard to Burton's positive experience, the setting up of workshops and related measures, such as the holding of seminars should be directly supported by universities and academics. It should be stated that seminars must not have a fixed agenda but discussions should be open-ended to

explore any new ideas which may come up. Considering the special characteristics of the NK problem, it might be sensible for two authoritative British or American universities to take responsibility for the organizing of such workshops and the measures, ceremonies and meetings to be held therein. The scholar-practitioners who oversee the various sessions and who play a facilitative and diagnostic role have a crucial task. It is reasonable that the sponsoring universities should assume such responsibility by notifying and obtaining the consent and support of their respective governments and the OSCE. The establishing of university-based centres for conflict resolution in Armenia and Azerbaijan are also recommended. These centres for research and training, with special attention to culture and cultural analysis, would be supplementary.

The aim of setting up the problem-solving workshops must be to create an atmosphere in which the participants will be able to express their basic needs through the forming of effective relationships and to recognize and remove obstacles through a peaceful process in order to pave the way for compromise and agreement. On such grounds, the third party must facilitate the peace process in a fair way through a convergence of viewpoints and the removing of anxieties and a recognition of the needs of both sides.

Without doubt, Burton's emphasis on the role of the organizer in the NK conflict has another importance. Naturally, holding and running the problem-solving workshops is critical in relation to the conditions and complexities of the NK conflict. Therefore, one must be careful with selection. The organizer

must be able to begin the negotiations from a proper starting point and lead the discussions to creative and new results through measured planning as well as a controlled and balanced agenda. Otherwise, the business of the meetings will be preceded by accusations, complaints, demands and the claims of belligerents. Moreover, the taking of fixed positions will lead to a disturbance of the peace and a tense atmosphere, in which no progress will be made in bringing the viewpoints of the two sides together. Thus, the organizer must expertly guide the peace process towards common ground and interests, in order to achieve positive results.

Taking into account the characteristics of the NK conflict, the following attributes are the most important ones for the organizer to have: competence, ability, reliability and acceptability by both sides but, particularly, the sharing of a common culture and values with the disputants' culture and beliefs.

Apart from the organisers' role, members of the third-party workshops must be selected according to appropriate criteria. As Azar has emphasized, it is necessary that the facilitator board be impartial, well-informed, expert and reliable in the eyes of the adversaries in order to establish an open mind towards consultation with the third party (the third-party workshop). This will help it establish a mutual understanding between the two sides. Thus, it is proposed that selection of members of the third party (or the facilitator boards) be entrusted to the sponsoring university or universities, who will choose the members after widespread and comprehensive research. They should include political actors, leaders and activists from political parties and

movements, military personnel, the political elite, students and so on. The workshops should be coordinated with the relevant decision-makers of the parties and similarly the participants should be aware of the position of the decision-makers.

Another point is that in the organization of the workshops, the participants' selection must be balanced ethnically, by class and gender, so that they can arrange their activities and consultations effectively in a harmonious team. It is evident that any mistake in the selection of the participants will severely damage the running of the workshop.

In general, when arranging the members of the problem-solving workshops and the participants in the third-party workshop for this conflict, it is advisable to include:

- University professors in relevant fields, such as social psychology, political science, sociology, law, human relations, history and international relations from the sponsoring university or universities, along with professors from the opposing factions. It is also recommended to add professors from neighbouring countries to this group. As for Burton's positive experience, the participation of students from the sponsoring universities and other universities including those of Armenia and Azerbaijan can be effective in creating a lively and more scientific atmosphere in the workshops.

- Influential figures among the groups and movements of the disputing parties, outstanding party figures and generally reliable and influential political and social figures.
- Former statesmen and officials along with parliamentary representatives of past periods (particularly the members of foreign relations committees), former diplomats and politically-involved academicians
- Journalists and press editors, writers, poets and outstanding artists.

Regarding Azar`s positive practical experience, it is desirable to develop and improve the agenda by progress in the workshop. In other words, by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and bringing together the viewpoints of the two sides in the preliminary sessions. The official authorities and their representatives must also be invited to take part in subsequent workshops. In this respect, it is recommended to start this process with the parliaments of both sides and then invite other influential figures. With regard to the importance, sensitivity and influence of the meetings in which the official and governmental representatives participate, it is better to invite to the preliminary workshops younger and more flexible representatives as well as impartial statesmen and diplomats who have had an academic education.

If extremist elements like combatant volunteers, militiamen and well-known opponents of peace are invited to the social-psychological workshops, it can be fairly claimed that by being exposed to indirect popular negotiations, their mentalities will be gradually modified in the company of the scholars and flexible-minded young people taking part in the workshops. In a peaceful and

creative atmosphere, their views will be guided towards moderation and finally they will become advocates of peace. This is important especially considering the fact that similar extremist militants in Azerbaijan are becoming increasingly radical at the present time, to the despair of the mediators.

There are several examples of situations where hardline views have been moderated as a result. For example, Presidents Kocharian and Sarkisian, who were previously hardliners, became more amenable as they became involved in the negotiations after they became President. Also if the case of the Tajikistan conflict is reviewed, there is evidence of a shift from an extreme to a more moderate view after extremists were involved in the negotiation process.

As a final step in the peace process, the leaders and authorities of the conflicting states, neighbouring countries, and international figures should be invited by the OSCE to these conferences. The precise number of conferences will be decided by judging public opinion and feelings. The first conference that will take place depends on the agenda, and participant support will determine how it will be followed up in terms of other meetings and further conferences. The presence of Security Council members will certainly facilitate agreement and also guarantee implementation at a higher level. Of course, the sponsoring body must be explicitly designated as an executive guarantee for the peace treaty. In the matter of regional conditions and rivalry among the numerous actors in the area, the UN Security Council,

as the supreme international organization possessing the necessary tools to take on this responsibility, should attend. Also, if observers and peacekeeping forces are to be deployed, they should be invited from a state, whose impartiality is evident. If either party so wishes, the forces of the neighbouring states may be asked to cooperate. The timescale for these conferences should be flexible but they should take place as soon as possible.

As has already been indicated, the main emphasis of the Azeris and their associates was on the internal social structures of the conflict. Thus, their solutions were based on the goal of analyzing the social and internal obstacles for settling disputes psychologically through problem-solving and third-party workshops. Using this approach they tried to resolve the internal aspects of the conflict (which they believe are the main roots of the disagreement). But, in the NK situation, along with internal factors, there are external ones which are important and influential items in the process of conflict development. It is plain that rivalry among the powers has become greater compared with the Cold war era in sensitive and geo-political locations like the Caucasus. Thus, in the event of a war breaking out in such an area, it is understandable that the regional and global powers would try to manage and control it. Therefore, one needs to consider the use of third parties as a serious determinant in solving the NK dispute. It is clear that this important external aspect of conflict resolution has been ignored by the above-mentioned scholars, as they have only concentrated on the removal of relevant internal causes.

It should also be mentioned that Azar does not believe in the use of force by the superpowers to impose a settlement and he thinks that the final solution to the struggle is closely related to its internal features and to the social structures. But, in the case of the NK conflict, merely taking the internal aspects into account is impossible, for obvious reasons. In other words, any solution that disregards the national security and interests of the regional powers would not have any chance of being accepted and executed because the two sides are not prepared to study any such suggestion. Also any proposal that puts the national security and interests of Russia and Iran (like Goble's plan of territorial exchanges) at risk will be immediately rejected by both sides as, not surprisingly, they will avoid opening a debate on it. Besides, it is simplistic to imagine that the regional powers will overlook any peace plan or allow one that damages their national security and interests to be carried out. Thus, the national interests and security of the neighbouring states is a key point that must be considered in the peace plan of the NK conflict.

As Azar has emphasized, political and economic development is needed as a supplement in the practice of the workshops and problem-solving forums. In fact, this is a necessary condition for the final and stable solution of conflicts, because, problem-solving workshops can only achieve short-term success. Achieving fundamental goals will only be possible through long-term economic development and social and political reforms (including public harmony, intra- and inter- communities, and the removal of the conditions and grounds that have led to ethnic discrimination and warfare). It can be claimed

that these supplementary requirements for the problem-solving workshops constitute the most important conditions for establishing a stable peace in the region. It is quite clear that economic development and political and social reforms are absolutely necessary in the peace process of the NK dispute. Economic development perceived or otherwise is also a great 'leveller' and will hopefully bring people a shared enthusiasm for the future. Since the antagonists have been in a 'no war no peace' situation for many years, their economic status is extremely critical. On the other hand, the war broke out just after independence and the prolongation of the 'no war no peace' equation prevented these states from being able to progress with democratic development and political reforms. Thus, both sides are seriously in need of these improvements and undoubtedly the establishment of peace and stability in the region cannot be envisaged unless this vital factor is considered. If the Armenians or Azeris are unsuccessful with these reforms and developments, and if these problems are not addressed, there is little expectation of any stable peace in the region.

Therefore, the programmes related to the diplomacy of political and economic development must be carried out, while the peace process must bring about a convergence of the views of both sides, based on contemporary strategies for solving conflicts. In this respect, the OSCE should invite the G8 members, together with other European countries and international financial agencies, to seriously help the political and economic development and reform of the opposing factions by offering software and hardware aids together with

incentives to attract inward investors. Undoubtedly this will have positive effects on the peace process.

It is necessary to state that the western powers should be careful in offering economic assistance and following their political goals, which may be opposed to the interests of the regional states, as they require a proper understanding of the realities of the region. The west should know that the three great states of the region - Iran, Russia, and Turkey - have serious interests in the Caucasus. Thus, western politicians must consider the Caucasus as a whole and avoid arranging separate and particular policies for each part of this region, otherwise their political and economic assistance will not only have no effect in solving the NK problem, but will also cause the peace process to be prolonged.

It is clear that weak governments will never have the ability to compromise and on the other hand, the development of democracy will result in the greater participation of the people and more power to the government. Therefore, the assistance of countries and international agencies must be considered as a basic principle to put Azerbaijan and Armenia on the way to democratic reforms. In this respect, the role of the European Union, the UN and the three states of France, the United States and Russia is very important.

In addition to the need to use unofficial social and psychological methods as suggested above, it is also necessary to make use of other types of unofficial

diplomacy. Certainly, in ethnic conflicts, which are characterised by deep-rooted fear and animosity between two nations, it takes time to prepare the ground for compromise; because solving such disputes will not be achieved merely through an agreement, but it is important to achieve conditions in which the peace accord is permanently maintained. The experience of the Sudan conflict (1972), and the peace which lasted for a mere decade, teaches us that one must look for a plan in which the roots and grounds of the conflict have been totally removed. To succeed with such a peace plan, other types of unofficial diplomacy need to be used apart from the afore-mentioned solutions. Generally, one needs to adopt several measures simultaneously, such as holding problem-solving workshops and taking other relevant steps. Examples of these include:

- The introduction, by an agreement between the two governments, of social-psychological solutions and problem-solving workshops. As soon as their nominees have been sent to the workshops, the governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and NK must be encouraged to remove any direct or indirect propaganda from the agendas of the various organizations that would increase hostility between the two nations. For instance, a revision of the textbooks and the crossing out of historical references which were in some way indicative of the strained relations of both nations in the past. Similar topics must be eliminated from other texts, stories, poems, documents, movies and so on.
- In the next step, all propaganda needs to be centralized to generate fresh ideas and reform ethnic dreams so that a spirit of tolerance and

cooperation can be nurtured between the two nations. For instance the hostile subjects in the textbooks need to be progressively replaced by materials that help the peace process.

- Producing and broadcasting films and television serials aimed at advancing the spirit of compromise and conciliation in the opposing states. Although there have been numerous antagonistic indications in the history of both the Azeri and Armenian nations, signs of peaceful coexistence between the Armenians and Azeris in Azerbaijan and Armenia can also be found either in the era when this region was part of Iran's territory or during the 70-year communist government. The writer remembers well the story of an old Armenian woman who was forced to move to Yerevan from Baku. She used to call her Moslem neighbours and with tears in her eyes she chatted with them and reminisced about their tranquil life together. Therefore, producing movies and television serials which artistically show some fond memories and recollections of Armenian and Azeri coexistence will effectively prepare public opinion for reconciliation and the restoration of peace and stability in the region.
- Publishing essays in both languages which report economic problems and reveal the cost of the “no-war-no-peace” situation and in return the benefits of peace and reconciliation for the two opposing parties and the region. Similarly, NGOs and international peacemaking organizations are important for implementing the relevant plans for peace building.

Today, taking into account the positive experience in many conflicts, the success of such plans lies in not keeping anything secret since the

advantages and success of "Track Two Diplomacy" in solving international conflicts have been proven. It is obvious that demilitarization and the promotion of a civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan are the most important duties of these organizations.

Generally, peace-building activities must follow this aim so as to control ethnic hostilities and fear through political symbols, and to reform and moderate the dreams and ideals of the conflicting parties so as to replace antagonism with mutual understanding. These organizations will assume the direction of all peace-building processes like making films and television serials, publishing essays as well as poems and books about peace.

- Trust-building measures are some of the most basic steps in the peace process and undoubtedly these would be extremely practical and effective in the NK context. Thus, these measures must be on the agenda in some form or other together with the social-psychological solutions. The mediators and international NGOs involved in humanitarian measures and peace must always encourage both factions to adopt such initiatives. Actions such as granting unilateral and symbolic concessions, like the withdrawal from less important regions to show their good intentions to bring about reconciliation and stop the conflict will definitely be effective and have psychological consequences by preparing an atmosphere for peace and reconciliation.
- At the present time, most scholars and experts in conflict resolution believe that the cooperation and participation of different levels of society

as well as that of the administration of the country are vital for solving any disagreement. This is because in the end they must consent to a peace treaty. It is clear that no peace accord will ever be finalized without the will and assistance of public opinion. The NK conflict is about issues which can never be resolved except by political leaders and authorities, as the mediators and influential powers are not able to settle it because they do not have the tools to change the values of the belligerents. Thus, the only way of resolving the NK conflict is by gradual planning to prepare public opinion and the agreement of the entire population. Such a solution is a combination of official (governmental) measures at all levels and unofficial (popular) efforts with the assistance of all strata and movements of society, along with the support of global powers and international finance organizations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the NK problem is the most obvious example proving the inefficiency of using solely traditional diplomatic solutions. Although some of those theorists mentioned have been effective in a few conflicts, such as Hossenrov's power-sharing proposal in the Balkan crisis, they have been applied to the NK context and have failed abysmally. Also, a mere reliance on contemporary problem-solving recommendations will not be responsive in the NK case. Thus, taking into consideration the peculiar character of the NK conflict, it is necessary to apply a combination of

procedures and test and use any formula that is recognized as being most appropriate and efficient for the NK situation.

In other words, what is needed is to combine a collection of intra-state measures along with inter-state efforts and super-state activities; because in such ethno-territorial fighting the only efficient answer is a comprehensive one consisting of past experience and the findings of present-day researchers. For instance, using an economic stimulus will never be effective on its own, but this recipe can be applied along with other solutions as a positive factor for solving the impasse. Thus, the granting of economic concessions and incentives to encourage both sides to start cooperation aiming at gaining common benefits will be much more likely to be effective. Among contemporary solutions, the social-psychological one seems to be the most suitable for the NK crisis because no psychological mechanism has so far been applied to prepare the conditions in which the two parties listen to one another seriously. From this point of view it may be said that the NK peace process has not really started.

Appendix 1:

Map of Nagorno Karabakh



Appendix 2:

Chronology of key events

1988

January

- The first forced population movements of the emerging conflict take place as Azerbaijanis flee Kapan

February

- The local soviet of the NKAO appeals to the USSR Supreme Soviet to transfer its centre from the Azerbaijani SSR to the Armenian SSR. Mass Armenia support for the proposal.
- An unofficial Karabakh Manukian.
- Soviet media reports on the death of an Azerbaijani citizen in Armenian hands. Mass reprisals. Committee is formed comprising Ter-Petrossian and Vazgen Armenians in Sumqayit, north of Baku. Official reports put the death toll at about 30, but Armenians claim it was far higher

- Karabakh party leader Boris Kevorkov is removed from his post.

March

- CPSU Central Committee General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev explicitly rules out any changes to the borders between union republics. Moscow announces an economic aid and investment package for the NKAO.
- Public-political organization 'Krunik' founded in the NKAO capital, headed by Arkady Manucharov, with the aim of leading the national-liberation movement of Karabakh Armenians..

May

- Resignation of first secretaries of the Communist Parties of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Karen Demirchian and Kyamran Bagirov.

June

- NK District Television Station established

June-July

- The Armenian SSR Supreme Soviet calls on the USSR Supreme Soviet to approve the local NKAO soviet's appeal for the region's transfer to Armenia. The Azerbaijan SSR Supreme Soviet condemns that appeal as interference into Azerbaijan's internal affairs. The USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium formally rejects the NKAO soviet's request.

September

- Russia declares martial law in NKAO.

September-October

- Following scattered inter-ethnic clashes, Azerbaijanis begin to flee from the NKAO and Armenia - to Azerbaijan.

December

- Karabakh Committee members arrested and taken to Moscow, where they are held in prison until May 1989.
- Armenia is struck by a powerful earthquake killing 25,000 people and leaving 500,000 homeless.

1989

January

- Moscow imposes direct rule in NK
- Volsky establishes a Special Administration Committee for Karabakh.

June-July

- Popular anger in Azerbaijan over the Karabakh Armenian demands. Mass demonstrations in Baku which serve as catalyst for the emergence of the Azerbaijan Popular Front.

August

- Azerbaijan imposes railway blockade on Armenia and NKAO. Armenians retaliate by staging labour strikes.

November

- The Armenian National Movement convenes its first congress in Yerevan and elects Ter Petrossian as Chairman.
- Moscow lifts direct rule on NK

December

- The Karabakh National Council passes a joint resolution with the Supreme Soviet of Armenia declaring NK's unification with the Armenian SSR.

1990

January

- Seizure of Azerbaijani hostages by Armenians in the region of Shaumian of Azerbaijan SSR.
- An illegal supply of approximately 100 tanks, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons by the Soviet military to Armenia.
- The Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet condemns the decision of the Armenian Supreme Soviet to include NKAR in its economic sphere declaring it a grave violation of the sovereignty of the Azerbaijan Republic.
- Armed attacks by Armenians who occupy the village of Karki in Nakhchivan
- 'Black January' - anti-Armenian pogroms take place killing about 90 and forcing virtually all Armenians to flee Baku
- Armed Armenian infantry show up in the village of Gushchu of Khanlar, NK
- Armenians assault the settlement of Sadarak in Nakhchivan Aron.
- Soviet troops enter Baku. 124 people killed and 737 wounded. A State of emergency is declared in Baku and in other Azerbaijani cities
- The Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani SSR demands the immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Baku.
- The Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR passes a resolution declaring illegal the July 1921 decision of the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party which left NKAR as part of the Azerbaijani SSR.

February

- Abdul-Rakhman Vezirov replaced as First Secretary of Communist Party of Azerbaijan by Motalibov, who is elected Azerbaijan's first President in September.

March

- The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani SSR passes a resolution on inadmissibility of territorial claims by the Armenian SSR. Armed thugs of the Armenian SSR attack villages of the Gazakh region of the Azerbaijani SSR. All civilians in these villages are killed.
- Attempts to organize elections of the Armenian SSR people's deputies in the territory of the NKAR fail.

May

- The resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR on the anti-constitutional decision of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR and its Presidium concerning NK.

June

- USSR President decrees on prohibition to form armed forces, which are not envisaged in the legislation of the USSR, and confiscation of illegally-kept weapons
- The Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijani SSR pass a resolution on resumption of sovereign rights of the Azerbaijani SSR in NKAR and measures for socio-economic development of the region.

September

- The People's deputies of the USSR from Azerbaijan appeal to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the forcible deportation of the Azerbaijani Armenians.
- Fighting along border between Nakhichevan and Iran as rioters destroy border installations. Tension eases after Soviet and Iranian authorities agree to ease restrictions on crossings between the two countries.
- Dozens die in inter-ethnic violence in Baku. Popular Front demonstrators demand resignation of communist authorities. Soviet troops use force to end unrest, killing at least 100 people.
- Ayaz Mütəllibov becomes Azeri Communist Party leader.
- Communist Party retains power in multi-party elections but parliament has an official opposition for the first time.

1990

January

- Ayaz Mutallibov becomes Azeri Communist Party leader.
- Seizure of Azerbaijani hostages by Armenians in the region of Shaumian of Azerbaijan SSR.
- The Soviet army illegally supplies approximately 100 tanks, artillery and anti-aircraft weapons to Armenia.
- The Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet condemns the decision by the Armenian Supreme Soviet to include NKAR in its economic sphere and considers it as a grave violation of the sovereignty of the Azerbaijan Republic.
- The village of Karki in Nakhchivan is occupied by Armenian-Russian troops
- In Azerbaijan's 'Black January', anti-Armenian pogroms take place killing about 90 and forcing virtually all Armenians to flee the city.
- Armed Armenian infantry enter the village of Gushchu in the Khanlar region of Azerbaijan
- Armenian assault on the settlement of Sadarak in Nakhchivan .
- Soviet troops enter Baku. As a result, 124 people are killed and 737 people are wounded. A State of emergency is declared in Baku and in other Azerbaijani cities.
- The Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani SSR demands the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Baku.

February

- Abdul-Rakhman Vezirov is replaced as First Secretary of Communist Party of Azerbaijan by Mutalibov, who was elected Azerbaijan's first President in September.

March

- Mikhail Gorbachev elected president of the Soviet Union
- The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijani SSR passes a resolution on inadmissibility of territorial claims by the Armenian SSR.
- The Supreme Soviet of the USSR passes a resolution on the situation in the Azerbaijani SSR and Armenian SSR and on the measures for normalising the situation in that region
- Armed Armenian SSR thugs attack villages of the Gazakh region of the Azerbaijani SSR. All civilians in these villages killed.

May

- Supreme Council of Azerbaijan SSR elects Mutallibov as the first President of Azerbaijan's SSR.
- Attempt to organise elections of the people's deputies of the Armenian SSR in NKAR territory fail.

June

- Decree by USSR President on prohibition to form armed forces which are not envisaged in the legislation of the USSR and confiscation of illegally kept weapons.
- The Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijani SSR passes a resolution on resumption of sovereign rights of the Azerbaijani SSR in NKAR and measures for socio-economic development in the region.

September

- The People's deputies of the USSR from Azerbaijan appeal to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, concerning forcible deportation of Azerbaijanis living in Armenia.
- Fighting flares along border between Nakhichevan exclave and Iran as rioters destroy border installations. Tension decreases after Soviet and Iranian authorities agree to ease restrictions on crossing between the two countries.
- Dozens die in inter-ethnic violence in Baku. Popular Front demonstrators demand resignation of communist authorities. Soviet troops use force to end unrest.

December

- The Supreme Council of Azerbaijan SSR officially renames the country the Republic of Azerbaijan and adopts the Declaration of Sovereignty.

1991

January

- The Armenians of Karabakh declare independence from Azerbaijan.
- The Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan SSR passes a resolution unifying the Armenian populated Shaumian region with the Kasum-Ismaïlov region of Azerbaijan, creating a new region called Geranboy

May-June

- The Soviet army and Azerbaijani special police troops round up thousands of Armenians from villages in the north of the NKAO and in neighboring districts of Azerbaijan and deport them to Armenia. Sporadic fighting intensifies.

July

- Heydar Aliyev elected a member of Azerbaijan's parliament.

September

- Mütallibov elected President of Azerbaijan in a single-candidate nationwide election.

- Nagorno-Karabakh's parliament proclaims establishment of independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.
- Levon Ter-Petrossian elected Armenian President. Armenia holds referendum and formally secedes from the USSR.
- Heydar Aliyev is elected chairman of the Nakhichevan Supreme Soviet.
- Meeting of Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Zheleznovodsk (Russia) mediated by the Russian and Kazakhstan Presidents.

November

- Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet annuls the autonomous status of the NKAO. The region's parliament responds by holding a referendum in which Karabakh Armenians vote overwhelmingly in favour of secession from Azerbaijan.

December

- Gorbachev resigns as president of the Soviet Union
- Azerbaijan approves the Declaration of Independence in a nationwide referendum
- The leaders of CIS countries call on Azerbaijan and Armenia to resume the negotiation process.

1992

January

- The Republic of Azerbaijan joins the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).
- Armenia joins the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)
- NK parliament declares the region's independence. Conflict escalates into full-fledged war

February

- Karabakhi Armenian forces attack the Azerbaijani-populated village of Khojaly in NK and take control of the city
- Iran seeks unsuccessfully to mediate a cease-fire

March

- The Azerbaijani parliament blames President Mutalibov for the Khojaly massacre and forces him to resign
- The CSCE creates the 11-country Minsk Group with the aim of mediating a solution to the conflict

May

- Karabakhi Armenian forces take the town of Shusha and extend control over the Lachin corridor linking Karabakh and Armenia. Former Azerbaijan President Ayaz Muttalibov is forced to flee to Russia after an abortive comeback attempt. The Azerbaijan Popular Front takes power in Azerbaijan.
- Ghambar is elected as the new Chairman of the National Assembly of Azerbaijan and takes on the temporary duties of President of Azerbaijan until the national elections.

June

- The first Minsk Group emergency meeting held in Rome.
- Azerbaijan launches offensive against Armenians in Mardakert, in northern Karabakh, and the neighboring Geranboi/Shaumian district of Azerbaijan, displacing some 40,000 Armenians.

August

- Robert Kocharian becomes head of a new State Defence Committee, established as Nagorno Karabakh's executive body.

October

- The United States Congress passes Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act prohibiting US government aid to Azerbaijan.

December

- The OSCE Stockholm meeting fails to agree ceasefire agreement as Azerbaijan backs down.

1993

February-June

- Armenian forces launch a counter-attack and retake Mardakert. They go on to take Kelbajar in April 1993, a defeat that paves the way for an uprising in June by rebel Azerbaijani Colonel Suret Huseinov.
- Azerbaijan's President Abulfaz Elchibey forced into exile
- June: The return to power of Heydar Aliyev

March

- Meeting of personal representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, USA, Turkey and chairman of the CSCE Minsk group

July-August

- Karabakh Armenian forces take Agdam, and then push south towards the Iranian border, occupying the Qubatli, Jebrayli, and Fizuli districts.

August-September

- Russian envoy Vladimir Kazimirov mediates a temporary cease-fire, which is subsequently prolonged until early November.
- Aliyev meets Russian President Boris Yeltsin and renounces a military solution to the conflict.
- Direct talks between Azerbaijani and Karabakh representatives take place in Moscow.
- Aliyev elected Azerbaijani president in October 1993.

October

- Azerbaijan violates cease-fire by launching a new offensive.
- Karabakh Armenian forces repel the attack and then advance westward to take Zangelan district in southwest Azerbaijan.
- The UN Security Council adopts four resolutions calling for a halt to the fighting.
- Aliyev is elected President of Azerbaijan.
- UN Resolution 874 (14th October) stipulates a timetable for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories.
- Minsk Group Chairman, Mr. Mario Raffaelli, presents a peace plan for the settlement of the NK conflict.

November

- UN Resolution 884 condemns the occupation of Goradiz and Zengelan. The year ends with a renewed Azerbaijani offensive

December

- Azerbaijan launches a new offensive to the south of Karabakh and initially wins back some territory in fierce fighting, but is then forced to retreat.
- The Republic of Azerbaijan joins the CSCE Charter of Paris on 20th December 1993

October

- Azerbaijan violates cease-fire by launching a new offensive. Karabakh Armenian forces repel the attack and then advance westward to take Zangelan district in southwest Azerbaijan.
- The UN Security Council adopts four resolutions calling for a halt to the fighting.

1994

January-March

- Azerbaijani and Armenian forces suffer heavy losses in fierce fighting from late January to mid-February.
- Series of negotiations and consultations to reach an agreement on cease-fire through the mediation of Russia and CSCE.

March

- Visit of the peacemaker group of the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of CIS headed by Speaker of Kyrgyzstan Supreme Council, together with Russian President's representative to Baku, Yerevan, and NK.

May

- The Bishkek Protocol is signed and a cease-fire begins on 12th May.

July

- The Defence Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the head of the Karabakh armed forces sign a further cease-fire agreement legalising the Bishkek Protocol.

August

- Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Karabakh representatives meet in Moscow to discuss a so-called Major Political Agreement to resolve the conflict.

September

- September: Azerbaijan signs a contract to develop its offshore Azeri-Shirag-Gunashli oilfields with foreign companies.
- Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin at their Washington meeting discuss the NK conflict.

October

- Huseynov flees Azerbaijan as the suspected organiser of an alleged failed coup.

November

- In the third round of talks since the ceasefire, Azerbaijan makes new demands for the inclusion of Karabakhi Azeris in the process and insists on a CSCE-mediated peace process.

December

- At the CSCE Budapest Summit it is decided to establish co-chairmanship of the Minsk Conference.

- At this summit the CSCE becomes the OSCE and Russia and Sweden become co-chairs of the Minsk Group. The High Level Planning Group of the OSCE is formed.
- Robert Kocharian is voted *de facto* President of NK by parliament on.

1995

January

- Newly elected NK Prime Minister, Leonard Petrossian, meets with representatives from the European Union.

February

- Negotiations between Azerbaijan, NK and Armenia, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Conference Co-Chairs in Moscow.
- The Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Conference and Minsk Group visit NKR.

March

- A coup attempt led by Deputy Minister of the Interior Colonel, Rovshan Javadov fails in Baku. He and dozens of other rebels are killed.
- A meeting of the NKR officials with the OSCE Minsk Group US representative, Joseph Pressel, in NK.

April

- Finland replaces Sweden as co-chair of the Minsk Group.
- NK, now acting as an independent republic, holds legislative elections.

May

- A new round of negotiations in Moscow in mid-May fail, with Azerbaijan insisting that representatives of both Armenian and Azerbaijani communities from NK be included as armed but not political actors.
- The OSCE Minsk Conference Co-Chairmen visit NK.

June

- Negotiations between the conflicting parties convene in Helsinki under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmen

July

- OSCE delegation headed by the newly appointed Co-Chairman of the Minsk Group from Finland and Russia visited NK

August

- US representative of Minsk Group, Joseph Pressel meets with Karabakhian officials.

September

- Personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Deputy State Secretary of Hungary, visit Karabakh.

October

- Negotiations between the conflicting parties are held in Finland under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen.

September

- Personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Deputy State Secretary of Hungary visit Karabakh.

November

- Azerbaijan's first members of parliament are elected.

May-December

- Series of negotiations within the framework of OSCE Minsk Group on the elaboration of agreement for cession of the military conflict.

1996

January-March

- Talks in Moscow on security issues fail to make substantial progress as the sides reject new OSCE proposals.

September

- Ter Petrosian wins the disputed Armenian presidential elections.

November

- Kocharian is elected *de facto* President of NK by popular vote
- Armenia breaks off direct consultations between the Presidential Advisers of Armenia and Azerbaijan

December

- The OSCE Lisbon summit addresses the security challenges facing member states
- Three main principles of the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict are formulated in the Statement of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. Principles of resolution that support Azerbaijan's territorial integrity are prevented by Armenia from being part of the final communiqué. These

principles are supported by 53 OSCE participating states. They are instead included as an annex, with Armenia's response recorded in a second annex.

- The OSCE issues a statement attempting to codify the legal status of the Republic of NK through high degree of autonomy within Azerbaijan

1997

January

- France succeeds Finland as co-chair of the Minsk Group.

February

- The United States is admitted as a third co-chair of Minsk Group

March

- The first joint meeting of the three OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen convenes in Paris.
- President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, appoints NKR President Robert Kocharian Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. NKR Prime Minister Leonard Petrossian becomes acting President of NKR.

April

- Negotiations between the conflicting parties take place in Moscow

May

- The Minsk Group presents a new peace proposal.
- 'Package' peace plan presented

June

- The Minsk Group co-chairs discuss the latest proposals with leaders in Armenia and Azerbaijan, who eventually accept the proposal in principle as a basis for peace. Armenia accepts with "serious reservations".

July

- A modified "package" proposal is worked on by Minsk Group co-chairs after meetings with President Aliyev in Baku.
- Aliyev visits the United States, signing agreements on investment with US President Bill Clinton. Revealing the confidential peace proposals, Aliyev announces that Azerbaijan would agree to a staged withdrawal from the occupied territories, leaving Lacin under NK's control at the first stage.

August

- NK rejects the 'package' peace plan submitted in late May.

September

- Arkady Ghukasian Foreign Minister wins NK's presidential elections to replace Kocharian
- 'step-by-step' peace proposal presented by the Minsk Group

October

- The NKR Representation Office opens in Washington DC, USA

October-November

- Armenia and Azerbaijan accept the latest OSCE peace plans as a basis for further negotiations, with some reservations. NK rejects them citing security concerns with the step-by-step proposal and demands a package approach. Ghukasian says a "confederative relationship" with Azerbaijan could be discussed, but not proposals that subordinate the region to Baku.

November

- Ter-Petrossian endorses the new approach and comments publicly on need for compromise. His move opens divisions within his own government and sparks a number of opposition demonstrations.
- The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen visit the conflict region

December

- At OSCE meeting in Copenhagen, no breakthrough is announced and requests by NK to be incorporated as a third party are rejected. A 'step-by-step' proposal is discussed and rejected. No new OSCE documents are produced as Armenia blocks a re-iteration of the 1996 Lisbon principles.

1998

January

- At a meeting of Armenia's National Security Council, powerful figures including Kocharian, Vazgen Sargsian and Serzh Sarkisian side against President Levon Ter Petrossian in rejecting the Minsk Group proposal.

February

- Ter- Petrossian resigns

March:

- In Armenian presidential elections, Kocharian wins in the second round in a poll criticised by international observers.

May

- During a visit by the Co-Chair's of Minsk Group to the region, Armenia, under new President Robert Kocharian officially recalled the early consent of former President of Armenia to stage-by-stage proposals.

August

- An opposition rally in Baku demands the resignation of Azerbaijan's leadership because of its inability to liberate Nagorno Karabakh

October

- President Aliyev is re-elected President of Azerbaijan.

November

- The Minsk Group 'common state' proposal is rejected by Azerbaijan. From the very beginning, Azerbaijan refuses to accept this proposal, and officially informs the mediators. Azerbaijan confirms its readiness to resume negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group on the basis of the Co-Chairs' proposals of September 19, 1997.

December

- Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Araz Azimov accuses Russia of delivering military aircrafts to Armenia.
- At the OSCE ministerial meeting in Oslo, the Chairman-in-Office appeals to parties to the conflict to resume negotiations in the framework of the Minsk Group.

1999

February

- The Secretary-General of the Interchurch Peace Council of Calvinist Churches, the President of the Helsinki Civil Assembly (HCA), participate in an international seminar in NK
- Additional delivery of 5 MiG-29 fighter aircrafts and surface-to-air missile systems S-300 by Russia to Armenia.

April

- Meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia during the CIS Summit in Moscow
- Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian attend the 50th anniversary summit of NATO in Washington.

May

- The Unity bloc, comprising Sargsian's Republican Party and Demirchian's People's Party of Armenia, wins parliamentary elections in Armenia

June

- Sargisian is appointed Prime Minister of Armenia

July

- A delegation from the US Jewish Committee visits NK and meets Ghoukassian.

August

- Meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Geneva.

October

- Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian meet on the Nakhichevan-Armenia border. A revival of the so-called Goble Plan for territorial exchange is discussed, provoking resignations among Aliyev's senior officials. The plan proves highly controversial in Armenia as well.
- Gunmen storm a session of the Armenian National Assembly and kill eight high officials comprising the core of the new political elite, including Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian and Speaker Karen Demirchian.

November

- OSCE Summit is held in Istanbul. The Final Document and the final report of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office underline the Minsk Group's importance for the settlement of the conflict.

December

- Prominent wartime commander Babayan is sacked as chief of NK armed forces.

2000

January

- The presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia meet during the Summit of the CIS member-states in Moscow
- At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Azerbaijan and Armenian Presidents meet to search for ways of peaceful settlement in the conflict

March

- President of NK, Ghukasian is seriously wounded in an assassination attempt in Stepanakert, and former Karabakh Defense Minister Babayan is arrested in its aftermath.

- Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian admits Armenia's internal troubles following the October massacre and admits the event almost "closed down" talks on NK.
- Armenian President Robert Kocharyan suggests a 3+3+2 collective security structure for the Caucasus, which would include the three South Caucasus countries: Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan; their neighbours, Iran, Turkey and Russia; and the European Union and the USA. All three South Caucasus countries had agreed on the need to establish a collective security system.

April

- Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan says his country is ready for talks with Azerbaijan. Oskanyan denies that Armenia is preparing for a new war with Azerbaijan stressing that Yerevan's top priorities are the promotion of regional cooperation and a European orientation in the country's development.
- US increases aid to NK. This aid programme is also designed to help people in Azerbaijan and Armenia who have suffered from armed conflict.

May

- It is reported that representatives from the Minsk Group would meet to discuss new peace proposals for the enclave. Washington's representative to the Group, Carey Cavanaugh, says that international organisations would also meet to discuss allocations of resources in the war-torn region

June

- Armenian President Robert Kocharyan says that the 'common state' idea underlying the latest proposals by the OSCE Minsk Group make it possible to optimise the interests of both sides and provided realistic possibilities to move forward in negotiations. Kocharyan notes that the proposal had been accepted by Armenia and the NK republic, but not Azerbaijan.
- NK holds unrecognised parliamentary elections.

July

- Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group visit the region.

September

- Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev meet at the UN Millennium Summit in New York, reaffirming the importance of the dialogue begun in 1999.

November

- In Minsk during the summit of the heads of CIS countries, representatives meet Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia.
- A conference for the heads of Foreign Offices of the Republic of Abkhazia, the NK Republic, the Moldavian Republic, and the Republic of South Ossetia, is organised in Tiraspol.

2001

January

- Azerbaijan and Armenia become full members of the Council of Europe.
- Meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Aliyev and Armenia, Kocharyan takes place in Paris.

March

- The two Presidents meet with President Chirac in Paris.

April

- Peace talks involving Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian are held in Key West, Florida.

May

- At the CIS Summit in Minsk a trilateral meeting between President of Azerbaijan, Aliyev, President of Armenia, Kocharyan and President of Russia, Putin is held.
- The OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, comprising Carey Cavanaugh of the USA, Nikolai Gribkov of Russia and Philippe de Suremain of France visit NKR.

July

- A meeting between Abkhazia, NK, the Cisdniestrian Moldavian, and the South Ossetia held in NK.

August

- At the Summit of the CIS countries in Sochi, President of Azerbaijan, Aliyev and President of Armenia, Kocharyan hold a bilateral meeting.

September

- The Minsk Group co-chairs visit Yerevan and Baku.

2002

January

- US President George W. Bush lifts Amendment 907 of the Freedom Support Act, which restricted American aid to Azerbaijan, as a reward for Azerbaijan's cooperation in the war on terror.
- The Minsk Group co-chairs visit Baku and Yerevan to discuss "new ideas to reinvigorate and energise the peace process."

February

- In New York, Armenia's Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian meets with the co-chairs of the Minsk Group.

March

- Ghoukassian meets with Co-chairmen of the Minsk Group and First Deputy of Russia's Foreign Minister in NK
- Ghoukassian meets Shane Pritchard, manager of the programme on mine-clearance and unexploded shells in the NK. The programme is supported by the HALO Trust, a British humanitarian NGO.

May

- Pope John Paul II makes his first visit to Azerbaijan and appeals for an end to religious wars.
- Armenian and Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Ministers meet in Prague for Minsk Group-mediated discussions.

July

- In the final document of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Committee, the EU reaffirms its support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as the basis for the peaceful solution of the conflict.

August

- Arkady Ghukasian is re-elected *de facto* President of NK.
- The EU condemns holding of the so-called "presidential elections" in NK.

September

- Construction work starts on multi-billion-dollar pipeline to carry Caspian oil from Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia.
- Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Quliyev criticizes the UN Security Council for failing to seek Armenian compliance with its 1993 resolution.

October

- Forty-six US Congressmen send a letter to Ghukasian congratulating him on his election victory.

2003

January

- Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer criticizes Kocharian for a speech apparently suggesting that Armenians and Azerbaijanis are “ethnically incompatible” and cannot live in the same state.

February

- In the first round of voting in the Armenian Presidential election, more than 250 opposition activists, supporters and observers are detained.
- Baroness Caroline Cox, the Vice-Speaker of the House of Lords of the British Parliament, and Robert Wareing, member of the House of Commons send a letter congratulation NK officials on the 15th anniversary of the Karabakh movement.

March

- Kocharian is re-elected Armenian president with 60 per cent of the vote
- Ghoukassian meets with the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, in NK.
- Presidential and parliamentary elections are condemned by international election observers for failing to meet democratic standards.

April

- The Armenian Constitutional Court rules that the Presidential election result should stand, but that government should hold referendum of confidence in Kocharian within one year. Kocharian rejects this.
- Aliyev collapses twice during an official ceremony being broadcast live on television.

May

- In the parliamentary election, the governing Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) led by Prime Minister Andranik Markarian and Defence Minister, Serge Sarkisian is declared victorious.

July

- Armenian Defence Minister, Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijani Defence Minister, Colonel General Safar Abiyev agree to ease tensions between the two countries' armed forces after meeting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.
- Heydar Aliyev is taken to hospital in Turkey. In August, he is transferred to Cleveland, in the United States.
- Azerbaijani parliamentarians participate in the 10th OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session in Rotterdam.

August

- Ailing President Heidar Aliyev appoints his son Prime Minister, putting him in line to succeed his father.

October

- Ilham Aliyev is elected President of Azerbaijan. The election is condemned by international observers for failing to meet democratic standards.

December

- Death of Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev's is announced.

2004

January

- President Aliyev declares in Paris that Azerbaijan will never accept Karabakh's independence or integration with Armenia.
- Armenian Foreign Minister dismisses an Azerbaijani offer to lift Armenia's economic blockade in exchange for the return of Armenian-controlled Azerbaijani territories around NK.
- Parliament of Azerbaijan adopts a new anti-corruption law that defines corruption and outlines public officials' responsibility to fight it. It does not require them to disclose their assets or income.

February

- The European Parliament refuses to back calls by its chief South Caucasus rapporteur, Per Gahrton, for the return of Armenian-controlled territories adjacent to NK in exchange for the lifting of Azerbaijan's economic blockade of Armenia.

March

- The OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, visit Baku and Yerevan calling upon Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders to continue dialogue on the conflict.

April

- The Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia meet in Warsaw.
- Newly appointed Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov meets his Armenian counterpart, Oskanian in Prague, beginning a regular cycle of meetings known as the Prague Process.

May

- 12th – 13th: Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan meet with OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmen in Strasbourg.

June

- The Foreign Minister of Armenia meets OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairmen with Turkish Foreign Minister Mr. Abdullah Gul in Prague: Meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Istanbul.

July

- At a press conference in Yerevan, Minsk Group mediators announce they will not bring any new proposals for the conflicting sides, saying that Armenia and Azerbaijan bear the responsibility for reaching agreements and a settlement.

August

- In unrecognised local elections in NK the opposition Movement-88 party scores a major success by winning the Stepanakert mayoralty.
- Meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers with Minsk Group Cochairmen in Prague.

September

- The 11th anniversary of the cease-fire is met with a worsening situation along the Line of Contact, as each side accuses the other of violations.
- Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian meet in Astana, Kazakhstan, with Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- NATO cancels the exercise in Azerbaijan when Armenian military personnel are refused visas.

October

- The Council of Europe's PACE adopts a resolution critical of Armenia's democratic record.

November

- Azerbaijan urges the UN on the 59th session of UN General Assembly to acknowledge Armenian settlement of the occupied territories.
- Meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Berlin.

December

- Meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers in Brussels in the framework of NATO EAPC.

2005

January

- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopts resolution 1416 criticizing Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory and containing references to ethnic cleansing.
- Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers meet Minsk Group Co-Chairmen in Prague.

February

- OSCE officials make their first inspection of Armenian-controlled Azerbaijani territories Aghdam, Jabrayil, Fizuli, Zangilan, Gubadly, Kalbajar and Lachin. They conclude that there is no significant involvement of the Armenian government in ongoing settlement processes in the occupied territories, while they observe some direct involvement of the NK authorities, above all in Lachin and a limited area east of Mardakert.

March

- Elmar Huseynov, an outspoken critic of the authorities, is shot dead in Baku.

April

- Oskanian and Mammadyarov meet separately with the Minsk Group co-chairs in London.
- Cease-fire violations along the Line of Contact escalate.

May

- Presidents Aliyev and Kocharian meet at the Council of Europe summit in Warsaw, reportedly discussing Armenian withdrawal from the occupied territories and approving further meetings between the Foreign Ministers.

June

- Political parties loyal to President Arkady Ghukasian win a surprise landslide victory in NK's parliamentary elections, winning nearly two-thirds of the vote.
- Oskanian and Mammadyarov meet in Paris. Oskanian tells the media that "common ground is in sight." Azerbaijan supports international calls for inter-communal contacts between Karabakh Armenians and Karabakh Azeris.

July

- The OSCE Group Co-Chairs, Ambassador Mann of the US, Merzlyakov of Russia and Fassier of France visit Baku and Yerevan.
- Anonymous Armenian sources suggest that an agreement on the use of a referendum to determine Karabakh's future status is close. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry quickly denies this.
- The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly considers a report on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict at its session held in Washington.

August

- Azerbaijan's military prosecutor reopens a criminal investigation into the killings at Xocali in 1992.
- Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev meet in Kazan. The meeting is characterised as positive, but no details are divulged. Speculation surrounds reports of new approaches being discussed by Oskanian and Mammadyarov, allegedly comprising a combined 'package' and 'step-by-step' approach to the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories and the future use of a referendum to determine Karabakh's status.
- Meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents at the CIS Summit in Kazan.
- Meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers with participation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs in Moscow.

October

- The International Crisis Group releases a report entitled "Nagorno-Karabakh: A Plan For Peace."

November

- The ruling New Azerbaijan Party emphatically wins parliamentary elections. International observers say vote failed to meet democratic standards.

December

- Foreign ministers Oskanian and Mammadyarov meet informally with the co-chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group in Ljubljana, on the sidelines of the annual OSCE Foreign Ministers' meeting.

2006

January

- Meeting between Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov in London.
- The reconnaissance trip of the High-Level Planning Group (HLPG) of the OSCE to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

February

- Armenian President Robert Kocharian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev meet in Rambouillet, France
- OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs visit Armenia and Azerbaijan.

March

- The Azerbaijani-Armenian Peace Forum, held in Vienna is the latest in a series of such meetings sponsored by London-based NGO, International Alert, describing itself as "an international peace-building" organisation.

May

- The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group meet in Moscow.

June

- Armenian President Robert Kocharian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev meet in Bucharest.
- Armenian Foreign Minister, Oskanian and Azeri Foreign Minister, Elmar Mammedyarov meet in Paris.

July

- Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline formally opened in Turkey.
- Survey conducted by the World Bank says corruption in Azerbaijan has not improved.
- The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopts a resolution calling on both Armenia and Azerbaijan to intensify their efforts to resolve the conflict.

October

- President Robert Kocharyan meets with the Prime Minister of Russia Mikhail Fradkov in Moscow.
- Eleven members of the Subcommittee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities visit Azerbaijan on 16-17 October.

November

- Ambassadors Fassier of France, Merzlyakov of Russia and Bryza of the United States, the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group, present a joint statement on NK to the OSCE Permanent Council.
- The meeting of leaders of CIS countries is held in Minsk. Both Presidents meet on the sidelines of the summit.

December

- NK authorities hold a referendum on a draft constitution. 83 per cent of voters approve the entity's first constitution .The Co-Chairs issue a statement saying they do not believe such a referendum will contribute to a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

2007

January

- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov hosts Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov.
- Azerbaijani state oil company stops pumping oil to Russia in dispute over energy prices.

March

- Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian and his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov conclude a round of talks in Geneva on the conflict

June

- After US-Azerbaijani meeting in Washington D.C. In a joint press conference, it is announced: "In the circles of international law there is no universal formula for the supremacy of territorial integrity over the right of self-determination of people."
- Russian President Vladimir Putin offers United States use of Russian-leased Qabala radar station in Azerbaijan as alternative to US plans to build missile defence system in Europe.

July

- NK elects former head of security service Bako Sahakian to replace Arkadiy Gukasian as President who is steps down after holding the post for two five-year terms. He wins 85 per cent of the vote.

October

- Serzh Sargsyan called Pentagon to give equal military aid to Yerevan and Baku.

November

- US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner meet with Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers,, Vardan Oskanian and Elmar Mammadyarov to demonstrate political-level support for the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries' effort to forge a just and lasting settlement of the conflict.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministers meet in Madrid.

December

- At the OSCE Madrid summit, the co-chairs of the Minsk Group present a new document on resolving the Mountainous Karabakh conflict.
- Azerbaijan's deputy Foreign Minister says that Azerbaijan is prepared to conduct anti-terror operations in NK against alleged bases of the Kurdistan Workers Party.

2008

February

- President of Azerbaijan, Aliiev, in a meeting with Slovenian Foreign Minister, Dmitrij Rupel, indicates Baku was contemplating waging war for control of the disputed territory.
- Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sarksyan, an ally of Kocharyan, wins the Presidential elections, beating former President Ter Petrosian.

March

- Thousands protest over election results in Armenia, which the opposition says was rigged.
- The government declares state of emergency and arrests opposition activists.
- The UN General Assembly passes an Azerbaijan-sponsored resolution, which expresses support for the Minsk Group, but reaffirms Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.
- The worst fighting in recent years breaks out in NK. Azerbaijan and Armenia accuse each other of starting the clashes, which leave several dead on each side.

April

- Azerbaijan allows Russian cargo of nuclear heat-isolating equipment to cross into Iran after holding it up for a month. The equipment was intended for the Bushehr nuclear plant.

July

- Minsk Group co-chairs meet in Krakow to update proposals for a solution to the conflict.

September

- Armenian Defence Minister, Seyran Ohanyan says during his meeting with Co-Chair of OSCE Minsk Group that negotiations within OSCE are the most efficient format for settling the conflict.

October

- Ilham Aliyev wins second term as President of Azerbaijan after disputed electoral victory which was boycotted by the main opposition parties.
- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visits Armenia.
- The right for self-determination of the Artsakh (Karabakh) people is stated in Madrid agreements between Armenian and Azerbaijani parts, claims ex-Foreign Minister of Republic of Armenia, Vardan Oskanyan.

November

- Sarkysyan and Aliyev sign a joint agreement in Russia to intensify efforts to resolve the NK dispute.

December

- Helsinki hosts a five--sided meeting of Russian and French Foreign Ministers, the US Deputy Secretary of State and the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

2009

January

- Meeting of Presidents and Foreign Ministers of the two countries in Zurich. Co-chairs of the Minsk Group, Yuri Merzlyakov, Matthew Bryza, Bernard Fassier, and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk also participate.

February

- The International Institute for Strategic Studies, in its annual report indicates that Azerbaijan has an army of about 67,000 men, while Armenia's army numbers 42,000 – some 35 per cent less. Azerbaijan also surpasses Armenia for the number of reserve forces available for mobilisation, with 300,000 against Azerbaijan's 200,000. Azerbaijan commands three times more tanks and armored vehicles than Armenia. Azerbaijan also has a three-fold supremacy over Armenia in warplanes.

March

- Referendum passed to abolish a law limiting the President to two terms in Azerbaijan.

May

- Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan meet at US Embassy in Prague.

- Vladimir Kazimirov, former head of Russia's mediation mission and ex co-chair of Minsk Group comments that all the sides of the conflict will not agree to Turkey's mediation.

June

- Dmitry Medvedev President of Russia, Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia, and Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan meet in Saint Petersburg.

July

- In a joint statement released at the G8 eight summit in Italy, the Presidents of the US, France and Russia express their commitment to resolving the NK conflict on the basis of the Madrid agreement in 2007.
- Just four days after Presidents Obama, Sarkozy, and Medvedev announce support for settlement of the conflict, including the non-use of force, President Aliyev threatens, "Unfortunately, I cannot totally rule out a military solution, as we have the total right to restore our territorial integrity, based on international law,."

August

- American Co-Chair Matthew Bryza announces in Tsahkadzor during "Euroforum," that the OSCE Minsk Group cannot exert pressure on either Armenia or Azerbaijan.
- US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza says that President Obama shares the opinion that Armenia should return the occupied lands to Azerbaijan.

Appendix 3:

The people of Nagorno Karabakh

The modern Armenians are a mixture of the indigenous peoples of the ancient kingdom of *Urartou* - straddling North-eastern *Anatolia* and south-western *Transcaucasia* - and Indo-Europeans who entered the region at the end of the 8th century B.C.⁶¹⁵ But the Armenians were not the only people who lived in the region, (when?) as Muslims were present too. In other words, Muslims and Armenians together made up the majority of NK's population, and only in the contemporary era did some Russians and other races settle in the region. According to extant information, in 1805, the population of NK consisted of 10,000 families, which fell to 7,474 in 1808 due to the Russo-Persian war. The war forced the Caucasians to emigrate to Iran. In 1823, the number of families reached 20,095, of which 15,729 were Azerbaijanis and 4,366 Armenians. This made up a total of 90,000 inhabitants.⁶¹⁶ 78 per cent were Muslim and 22 per cent were Armenian.

During the annexation of NK by Russia, 80 per cent of the Karabakhi residents were Azerbaijani or Arrani and 20 per cent Armenian, but after they had been forced to immigrate to NK, their population gradually increased.⁶¹⁷ During the Russo-Persian war (1826-1828), 18,000 Armenian people were forced to move to NK (according to an Azeri source, the number was 18,000 families.)⁶¹⁸ Also, from 1828 to 1830, 40,000 Armenian families from Iran and 84,000 from Turkey settled in Karabakh and Yerevan. At that time NK was one of the states governed by Yelizavetpol. During the presidency of Stalin, and after these obligatory migrations, the Armenian population grew to about four times that of the Azeris. However, Armenian sources provide other justifications for the demographic changes in the region. However, what seems certain is that the demographics of NK changed during the 150 years of affiliation with Russia.⁶¹⁹

In 1823, 158 villages out of a total of 556 belonged to the Armenians and the remaining 398 to the Azeris. According to the 1832 census made in these villages, 8,000 families out of a total of 20,420 were Armenian.⁶²⁰ But during the following years, the forced emigration of Armenians continued even up to the early 20th century, in such a way that, from 1896 to 1908, 400,000 Armenians relocated to the Caucasus, especially to NK.⁶²¹

According to the census of 1897, 54,841 families inhabited NK, of whom 29,350 were Azeri, 18,616 Armenian, and the rest from other nationalities. Also, according to the 1917 census, from among the whole population of 574,194, 317,861 persons (55.4 per cent) were Azeri and 243,627 (42.6 per cent) were Armenian, with the remainder from other races.

In 1979, the number of inhabitants of NK was 162,200, of whom 123,076 were Armenians (75.9 per cent) and 37,264 Azeri (23 per cent), with the rest from other races. According to the census of 1989, the number of Karabakhi

inhabitants was 189,020, of whom 76.9 per cent were Armenian and 21.5 per cent Azeri, with the remainder from other races such as Russians, Kurds and Jews. The population density was 43 persons per sq/km.⁶²²

Other sources confirm the above numbers. For instance, according to one source, in 1970 the composition of the Karabakhi population was 80.5 per cent Armenian, 18.1 per cent Azeri, 0.9 per cent Russian, and the remainder from other races.⁶²³

According to other sources, the total population of the autonomous NK was 157,200, of whom 81 per cent were Armenians, 18 per cent Azeris, and 1 per cent Russians.⁶²⁴

In 1988, in his book about the history of the Caucasus, Chrysanthopoulos, the first Greek ambassador to the Republic of Armenia, described NK, as an enclave with a population of about 182,000 people, 75 per cent of whom were Armenian.⁶²⁵

It should be mentioned that from the end of the war until now, all other nationalities have left NK except the Armenians, so the ethnic composition of the population has become homogeneous. Nevertheless, the critical security and economic situation has forced thousands of Armenians to leave the region. The current population is estimated at 100 to 160 thousand people.

Regarding population density, it has been calculated that about 86 per cent reside at an altitude of between 500 and 1500 metres, about 10 per cent live at an altitude of less than 500 metres, 3 per cent between 1500 and 2000 metres and 1 per cent at an altitude of more than 2000 metres. 42 per cent of the inhabitants are city dwellers. According to the January 1977 census, the proportional density of the population was 35.5 persons per sq / km. (The density in the 1989 census was 43).⁶²⁶

Culture and Monuments

From ancient times to the present, many languages and dialects have been spoken in NK, such as Indo-European languages, the ancient Iranian language (*Pahlavi*), *Armenian*, *Alsti*, *Talyshi*, *Kurdish*, *Tati*, and *Assyrian* from the Semite stock. These include Turkish and Turkmeni dialects since the Turks and Huns attacked from the north and the Seljuks from the south and the states near the Caspian Sea; not to mention the Azeri language, which was well-known among the Turks in recent centuries.⁶²⁷

The presence of different tribes and the currency of different languages in NK gave rise to a multiplicity of cultures and beliefs. The worship of natural forces like the sun and stars was prevalent in some parts of the region. Some vestiges of Jewish communities have also been found in the region. At the end of the third century, a number of events such as the Perso-Roman wars and the severity of the Zoroastrian priests persuaded the inhabitants of Armenia to convert to Christianity. The Georgians followed them in 303 A.D.

during the Parthian dynasty. In the 5th century A.D., Christianity spread in the north of Karabakh (Daghestan) and some of the inhabitants came to believe in it, while on the other side of the Arax River, the Azeri people held on to their belief in Zoroaster.⁶²⁸

During the Achaemenian period, some signs of Zoroastrianism were found in the Caucasus. Although Christianity was common in most parts, the Zoroastrian religion started to spread among the Persians especially during the *Sassanid* and *Parthian* eras.

The existence of holy places like Bagh-van in Baku, (Lit. forever fire temple), *Girl tower*, *Anahit temple*, *Azergashsb* (fire temple), *Shiz* (fire temple), *Takht Soleiman* (castle), ... during the time of the *Atropat* and *Moghan* dynasties are evidence of the religious and cultural status of the region at the beginning of Islamic expansion.

The Muslim advance in the Caucasus started in the south in 642 A.D with the inhabitants of *Derbent*, and in 645-646 A.D the natives of Armenia recognized Islam. In 654 A.D, the Muslims took possession of Georgia and in 661 the Azeris and Arranis converted to Islam. Therefore, we can claim that Karabakh was one of the territories conquered by the Muslims.⁶²⁹

The great cultural development dates back to the era of *Ghuz* and *Seljukian*, when the long-term residence of the Turks in some parts of the Caucasus and Azerbaijan changed the language of the older inhabitants and close contact and inter-marriage resulted in the Azeris and Arranis and most other tribes being looked upon as Turks, and the language, while keeping some Persian and Arabic words, tended to be Turkish. After the Mughols under Holakukhan had attacked and taken possession of Azerbaijan and Arran (which coincided with the Turkish immigration to the region), the situation totally changed.

Although the Ottoman rulers oppressed the people, when Islam spread to the region, the Christians sought Iranian support and Iran became a safe haven for them. In this regard. The support of Shah Abbas I (the Iranian monarch) and the concessions which he granted to the Christians confirm this matter. In fact, there is no evidence of conflict between the Iranian Muslims and Armenians and Georgians (apart from some governmental injustices). Therefore the Christians of the Caucasus always believed that, after Armenia and Georgia, Iran was their homeland.

Islam and Christianity – the two great religions in the region – have left hundreds of historic and cultural traces, such as mosques, churches, petrographs, music, literature, paintings and poems - some of which date back to the early years of development of the two religions in the region. Some sources estimate that the number of Armenian remains, such as buildings, churches, and so on is fifteen thousand.⁶³⁰

The Iranian civilizations left other obvious traces in the region. The prominence and the fame of these Iranian, Islamic and Christian vestiges in

Karabakh are too many to be disclaimed. Although, after the war, with the increased homogeneity of the population, there was a fear that these relics, which belonged to the Islamic era might be destroyed, the Azerbaijani government has always protested and worried about the destruction by the self-proclaimed Karabakh of its cultural artefacts.

Appendix 4:

Early History of the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

The Period of Persian Dominance

Despite the bravery and sacrifices of Abbas Mirza's army and Iran's friends in the Caucasus, the Gulistan Treaty was concluded and Iran's historical and absolute sovereignty over Karabakh came to an end, as a result of the first Russo-Persian war.

In 1816, General Alexei Petrovich Yermolov was appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces in the Caucasus. Under orders to spare no effort to suppress the Moslems, he played an important role in weakening Iran's position with respect to Islam and the future of the Caucasus.

He started his work in the Caucasus in the belief that the death of one Moslem would bring prosperity to 100 Russians.⁶³¹ He destroyed the traditional ruling system over Karabakh and organized the former supporters of the Khan into a Tsarist county council.

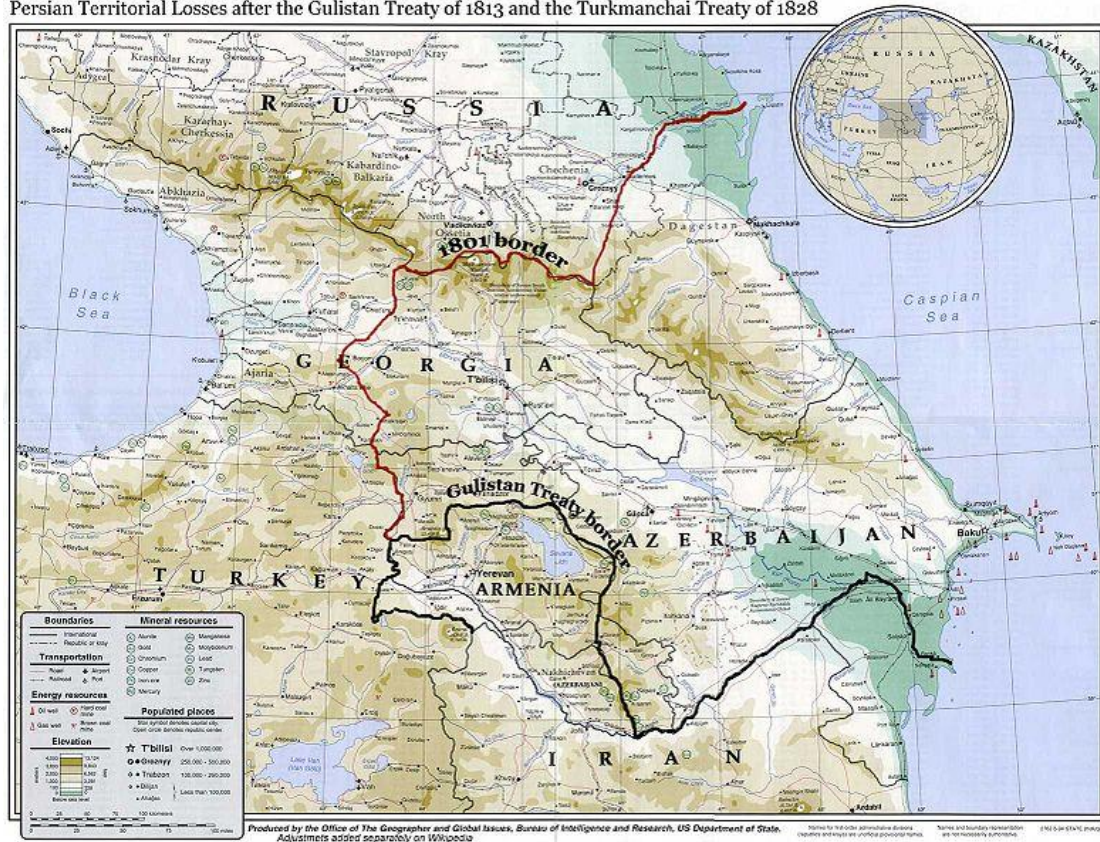
The setting up of a new socio-political structure in Karabakh compelled the Khans and the tribes to migrate beyond the Arax River. Soon, factors such as the withholding of their coveted lands, the receiving of distressing news about Moslem conditions in the Caucasus and Karabakh, along with provocations by the banished Khans, fierce battles between the Iranian and Russian forces and, more importantly, the proclamations of the Islamic authorities for a *jihad*, forced the Qajar Shah into another war against Russia for which he was ill-prepared. Thus, Abbas Mirza left the royal seat in Tabriz for Karabakh with an army consisting of tens of thousands of men. Abbas Mirza achieved great victories in the early battles and liberated many parts of Karabakh, but his defeat in Ganja against the Russian forces under the command of General Paskevich changed the course of the war.⁶³²

In the end, the Treaty of Turkmenchai, was concluded between Iran and Russia, together with a commercial agreement, on the 10th February 1828. Based on the peace treaty, the provinces of Nakhichevan, Yerevan, Talysh, and Shora-gail were handed over to Russia. Iran also undertook to pay five million korrer in gold to Russia as indemnity. The Arax River was thenceforth defined as the border between the two countries and naval movement in the Caspian Sea belonged exclusively to the Russians.⁶³³

As a result of this treaty, Iran not only lost its domination over the Caucasus but the treaty also paved the way for Russia to have an enhanced presence in Iran's political, economic and even security sphere.

Map 1 shows the loss of Persian dominance up until 1828. The map also shows how the Iranian land mass was reduced as a result of the shifting of the border.

Persian Territorial Losses after the Gulistan Treaty of 1813 and the Turkmanchai Treaty of 1828



The Period of Tsarist domination

With the annexation of Karabakh by Russia, an important historical period had begun in the fortunes of the region. The Russian authorities decided to reconstruct all borders, identity and historical notions (identities) in the region of the Caucasus. In the first phase, they set about zoning the area so that the newly-established administrations were incompatible with the racial and cultural organization of the region. They did this because they recognized that stabilizing and perpetuating their sovereignty required the existence of continued tensions and conflicts among the tribes and nationals of the empire. Besides, all Russian plans were aimed at expropriating the Caucasus from the Iranians and the Ottomans and turning it into an inseparable and integral part of the Russian empire.⁶³⁴

In the early stages of capturing the Caucasus, the Russians intended to deprive the Iranians and Ottomans of their influence. To this end, they supported the Armenian nation and protected them because their loyalty and cooperation was necessary to strengthen Moscow's hegemony in the region. In this respect, they established an Armenian province comprised of

Nakhichevan and Yerevan in such a way that there was no unity between them either geographically or racially.

Another important and decisive change made by the Russians after the annexation of Karabakh, and a factor which played a vital role in its future development, was a transformation of the demography which entailed the loss of the Moslem majority in the region. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russians made every endeavor to put their expansionist goals into practice, claiming to support Christianity. Thus, in the war with the Ottomans, they encouraged the Armenians of that country to move to the Caucasus and in the first stage of this plan about 100,000 Armenians relocated there. They also arranged a special plan for Armenia settlement in certain regions such as Karabakh.

The emigration of Armenians from Iran was carried out according to Article 13 of the Turkmenchai Treaty and about 50,000 Armenians transferred to the Caucasus. Thus, in the first years after annexation, about 150,000 families moved there and this issue caused a noticeable alteration in the demography of Karabakh. In fact, the loyalty of the Karabakh Armenians prompted the Russians to alienate the Armenian people in the area.

As for the transformation in the administrative structure, it should be mentioned that after the annexation of Karabakh by Russia, the latter dissolved the Karabakh Khanate and transformed it into a Karabakh province in 1822.

Having stabilized their control, the Russians revised the whole administrative organization of the Caucasus and dissolved the Armenian province in 1844. This time, they divided the region into two governorships: Georgia or Imeretia (consisting of the former Armenian provinces of Akhalkalaki, Lorri and part of Ganja) and the Caspian or Khazar (consisting of the eastern part of the Caspian Sea and Karabakh). Later on, Karabakh became part of the state of Shamakhi which was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1859 and the county town was transferred to Baku. Karabakh was situated in this state as before.

From 1868 onwards, the administrative structure of the region was radically changed and the Caucasus was divided into five provinces by Russia. Karabakh became part of the newly-created Elizavetpol province (Elizavetpol was the new name for Ganja), and Karabakh was situated between Shusha and Zangezur in this province.⁶³⁵ It is noteworthy that in 1883 two new districts called Jivanshir and Jebrail came into existence during the organization of Shusha. The divisions continued until 1921.

In that year, during the creation of the Soviet Republic of Armenia, a vast area of historic Karabakh (known as Zangezur) was annexed to Armenia. In 1923, the mountainous regions of Karabakh (the whole of Jivanshir and the highland parts of Shush and Jebrail) were handed over to the Armenians. Thus, "The Province of Autonomous Mountainous Karabakh" came into existence.

Throughout the 19th century, the principal Russian policy in the region was to weaken the Moslems within the empire, in such a way that the Tsarist period in Russia was considered to be the moment when the isolation of the Christian Caucasians came to an end in the Moslem-dominated world and marked the beginning of the subordination of Moslem Caucasians by a Christian, European society.⁶³⁶

The 19th century was an important period for Karabakhis. It may be described as a "transitional period" from feudality and political-social independency to administrative, governmental and bureaucratic relations. In other words, the 19th century linked the rulership of the Khans in the 18th century to the administrative and provincial government of the 20th century.

The end of the 19th century saw the appearance of a new factor in the geopolitics of Transcaucasia as national movements emerged representing the indigenous people of the region, especially the Georgians and Armenians.⁶³⁷ In 1896, Tsar Nicholas II granted the general governorship to prince Golitsyn, and he made every effort to 'Russify' the population. (It should be noted that according to some sources, between 1865 to 1897, population growth was 190 per cent; from 12,462 people in 1865 to 36,113 in 1897.)⁶³⁸ By closing Armenian schools and cultural institutes and seizing the property of the Armenian and Georgian churches as well as granting some administrative advantages to Moslems, Prince Golitsyn incited the Caucasian tribes against each other.⁶³⁹ This was in line with his "divide and rule" policy.

In this period, as a result of harassment by the Russians and the Ottomans, many Armenians formed political and nationalistic parties in order to combat the hostile acts of these governments. These parties, who were increasingly moving towards extremism, started their activities among the Armenians of the Caucasus and Karabakh.

In these conditions, the Armenians kept up a relentless and intense propaganda campaign while the Ottomans adopted a hostile and contemptuous attitude towards them, which finally led to greater antagonism between the Moslems and Armenians in the Caucasus and created a tense atmosphere between them.

With Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, anarchy spread throughout the country. The tsarist government provoked racial problems in the Caucasus to prevent the Caucasians from revolting.

However, the 1905 Russian revolution and an embarrassing string of defeats increased the Russian populace's dissatisfaction with the inefficient and corrupt Tsarist government and proved a major cause of the Russian Revolution of 1905. The causes of the 1905 Revolution went far back into Russian history. It was the product of more than a century of discontent and it encouraged the national and political identity of the Caucasian tribes. Thereafter, the issue of nationality was the subject of political debates among the reformist and revolutionary groups in Russia and the Caucasus. Thus, the

political and social ground was prepared and those widespread social movements that occurred all over Russia leading to the 1905 revolution, turned into an internal struggle between the Armenians and Moslems in the Caucasus. In this respect, the problem of the Armenians, who were in the majority in the mountainous part of Karabakh but in a minority in the Ganja province in general, was exacerbated.

After the 1905 revolution, an assembly was held to establish a new administrative organization whereby it was hoped that the governmental problems would be resolved democratically by developing *zemesto* (local administrative communities). The Armenians tried to place the mountainous areas of Karabakh under one single *zemesto* (comprising 365,000 Armenians, 134,000 Moslems and 28,000 from other nationalities) to find a remedy for the cultural and social problems faced by the Armenians in Karabakh.⁶⁴⁰

As the Russian government authorities adopted a more favourable policy towards the Armenians at this time, their plan was initially approved, but because of the repression of reaction in Moscow, it was neglected like other promised democratic reforms.

From 1905 to 1906, bloody and distressing clashes which were the result of Russian foreign policy in the region took place between the Armenians and Moslems in Baku. These brutal events spread to Karabakh too, and Shusha was twice surrounded by Moslems but after a few days' resistance, the Armenians were victorious.

Briefly, the unstable conditions among the Caucasian tribes continued until World War One and the Russian Revolution. During the First World War, although the Caucasus region nations did not take part in the conflict, one of the major goals of the Ottomans, who did participate, was to regain that area. Specifically, during the reign of their extremist war-hawking party under the leadership of Anvar, Talat, and Jamal in 1913, their main aim was to gain access to the Turkish-speaking regions of the Caucasus, Iran and Central Asia to compensate for the coveted lands of the Ottomans in Europe and Asia and to establish another empire in the region, to be known as "Turkistan". But, because of their defeat by the Russian army, this plan remained ineffective.

It should be noted that the Bolsheviks did not have very much influence in the Caucasus, so the different tribes and nationalities kept their unity under the rule of the Transcaucasus Commissariat after the coup of October 1917. In other words, the Bolsheviks only had influence in the Baku City Council, while parties like Dashnak, the Social Democrats and Mosavat (Equality), had greater sway among Armenians, Georgians and Moslems in general.

Karabakh became virtually autonomous after the 1917 revolution as the council in Shusha was responsible for administering it. This council, which had held three joint congresses, was comprised of Moslem and Armenian representatives. The Bolsheviks succeeded in some of their actions in

Karabakh too, the result of which was the formation of rural unions in Shusha, and Jivanshir. However, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks plunged into war in Shusha. At the Bolshevik assembly held on 31st August 1917 it was decided to form the Red Army to fight against anti-revolutionaries and to rerun the council elections. The first assembly of the Caucasian Bolshevik's organization was held in Tiflis in October 1917 and approved the right of autonomy for all nationalities.⁶⁴¹

By 1918, the Russian army evacuated the Caucasus and when they were gone Russia's vast southern territories were effectively unguarded. After a year of inactivity, the Turks finally went on the offensive. The Turkish army launched its campaign in late January of 1918.); the Dashnaks were waiting for such an opportunity to take their revenge on the Moslems, the result of which was the destruction of 211 villages and the murder of thousands of them.⁶⁴²

By this time, the Caucasus was in a state of anarchy, the Bolsheviks and other parties were at war, and racial conflicts were ignited in different regions. The Organization of the Caucasian Bureau, managed by the three nations, was weakened because of severe disagreements among their representatives. In such a situation, the Ottomans attacked the Caucasus, making the most of this opportunity (despite its failure and the continued withdrawal from the Damascus and Mesopotamian fronts).

Map 1 shows the inflows and withdrawals of the various forces who were involved in these conflicts



The Turkish all-out attacks commenced in January 1918 and aimed at an early arrival at Baku and the conquering of the city from the Bolsheviks. The Caucasian Bureau was dissolved on 26th May and Azerbaijan and Armenia declared independence on 28th May.⁶⁴³

In these developments Armenia was the main loser, because it was forced to submit to Turkey's conditions in the Treaty of Batum on 4th June, and to limit the size of Armenian-inhabited region to a small area, because of the risk of Turkish advances and to prevent a repeat of the 1915 genocide in the Caucasus. The Turkish forces, under the command of General Nuri Pasha, reached Ganja after passing through Armenia in late June.⁶⁴⁴ The Turks declared Ganja the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan and left quickly for Baku.

Karabakh had become virtually autonomous after 1917 and a council in Shusha, made up of Moslems and Armenians, elected representatives to administer it. This happened when there were violent racial clashes between the Armenians and Moslems in regions such as Baku and Yerevan. Generally though, Karabakh enjoyed peaceful conditions, but in late May, with the amalgamation of the Nuri Pasha army with the forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Karabakh took on special importance. The situation had now changed because control of the Nakhichevan-Zangezur- Karabakh border, as a safe and appropriate route connecting the Anatolian Turkish-speaking regions to the Caucasus, was of vital importance. Although the Yerevan administration was resigned to this state of affairs, the Armenians of Zangezour and Karabakh refused to submit to Turkish demands, and since the Ottoman forces were preparing to march towards Baku and were at war with the military forces of the Baku council, the Karabakhi Armenians took advantage of this opportunity to reorganize. On the 15th August, the first congress of the Karabakhi Armenians was held in Shusha attended by representatives of all the towns and villages inhabited by Armenians, and soon after the National Council had assembled, they declared Karabakh independent.

This time, the representatives of Nuri Pasha came to Shusha and asked the first congress to recognize Azeri sovereignty over Karabakh, surrender it to the Ottomans and allow their forces to enter Shusha. But the congress met the envoys with a negative response and they went back without achieving their goal. Meanwhile, during the negotiations in late August between the envoy of the Republic of Armenia, Kajaznuni and Khalil Pasha, they discussed Karabakh and Zangezour. Kajaznuni asked the Ottoman government not to support Azerbaijan's claim to hegemony over these regions, arguing in favour of the Armenian majority there.

On the 20th September, the Second Congress of the Karabakh Armenians was convened. The assembly sent a delegation to the commander of the second Ottoman division, based at Aghdam, for the purpose of negotiation.

Sultanov became the Governor-General of Zangezour and Karabakh and this was confirmed by Britain.

Simultaneously, following the Ottoman withdrawal from the area, a delegation consisting of the Shusha mayor and the commanders of the four-fold regions of Karabakh settled in Shusha and administered the regional office. On the 26th January, the Armenian government described this appointment as a violation of its territorial integrity and condemned it.⁶⁴⁵ In contrast, Azerbaijan took its right to the region for granted and considered it incontestable.⁶⁴⁶ The conflict was now well and truly established. The Armenian representatives made a request to put the issue of Karabakh on hold until the joint conference of the Caucasian republics had been convened in Istanbul to settle the regional problems. But the Ottomans demanded that they disarm and surrender so as to allow the Turkish forces to march on Shusha. After capturing Baku on the 15th September, Nuri Pasha was able to muster extra forces and suppress the Karabakhi Armenians. Thus there was no time for the third congress, which was to be held on 1st of October 1918, to examine the situation.

Two days later, Jamal-Jived Beg, the commander of the Ottoman division in Aghdam, presented a 24-hour ultimatum to the Council, ordering it to submit. The Armenian men were ready to defend despite the lack of soldiers and military equipment, but the National Council sent a delegation to Aghdam to negotiate with the Turks. This approach turned out to be fruitless, because a Turkish force of 5,000 men had already advanced from Askeran valley to Shusha before the conclusion of the ultimatum. The Ottoman army was deployed in a sector between Zengezour and Karabakh, and because the forces of General Andranik were engaged in a number of local clashes it was impossible for them to help Shusha. Thus, Grassim Melik-Shahnazarian, the Mayor and the representative of the Shusha Armenian conservative party, requested the third congress to submit to Turkish demands, after taking into consideration their capture of the lower area of Shusha and the risk of an Armenian massacre.

Shusha surrendered, but in each of the four regions of Karabakh, a partisan force was formed to defend themselves against the Ottomans. The struggle continued, and some changes came about during the victories on the World War One fronts, and this exacerbated Karabakh's problems.

By defeating Germany and its allies, the First World War was concluded and the Ottoman government submitted to the conditions for renouncing the conflict, one provision of which was the evacuation of the Caucasus by the Ottoman forces. Although many units of the Ottoman army remained to annex the Republic of Azerbaijan, initial pressure faded. Another consequence of the Ottoman defeat was the deployment of British military units in the Caucasus. On 14th November 1918, a division of the British army under the commander of the British forces, General M. Thomson, was stationed in the north of Iran. They entered Baku through Anzali to observe the withdrawal of Turkish forces from the region.

At the conclusion of the war in late October 1918, the military commanders of Armenian Karabakh requested General Andranik Ozanian to advance

towards Shusha to restore Armenian sovereignty in the region.⁶⁴⁷ After taking some Moslem villages, he finally entered the province, but before reaching Shusha, in the village of Avdallar, he received a message from General Thomson in the eastern Caucasus, written by two French and English officers,⁶⁴⁸ asking him not to go any further. The General stopped and returned to Goris, in the centre of Zangezour.⁶⁴⁹

This time, the Armenians thought of themselves as a minor ally of the Allied forces because of Azerbaijani ties with the Ottomans and Georgian links with Germany. The British government however supported Baku, as it had its eye on its oil resources⁶⁵⁰ and on strengthening its reputation and authority in India's Moslem colonies and Mesopotamia through the adoption of a friendly policy.

On the 28th December 1918, the British authorities announced their recognition of the Baku government and agreed to place Zangezour and Karabakh under the authority of Baku until it had presented the Karabakh conflict at the Paris peace conference.⁶⁵¹ This formally recognized Azerbaijan's claim to Karabakh in early 1920.⁶⁵²

On 15th January 1919, the Azerbaijani government appointed Dr. Khosrov Beck.

On 10th February 1919, the fourth Armenian Karabakh Congress was held in Shusha. It was declared in the meeting that NK, as part of the Republic of Armenia, had never recognized the authority of the Azerbaijani government.⁶⁵³

While the conference was going on, Khosrov Beck arrived in Shusha accompanied by a detachment of soldiers, under the command of Major Monk Maison, to negotiate the question of Azerbaijani authority. But after a month, the negotiations concluded without success.

In the spring of 1919, a delegation was sent to Goris by the British authorities and the Mosavations which asked Andranik to hand over Zangezour to Azerbaijan but he entrusted the administration to the representatives of the Republic of Armenia and set off for Echmiadzin on 2nd April.

Zangezour's defence against the Turks was soon to be led by another famous Armenian partisan, "Nzhdeh". Andranik's disappearance caused a relative weakening of the Armenian Karabakh position.

On 23rd April 1919 Colonel Shuttleworth, who replaced General Thomson as Commander of the British forces, arrived in Karabakh and gave instructions that the region should obey the orders of Governor-General Sultanov. The fifth assembly opposed Shuttleworth's demand and declared that "Azerbaijan has always been and remains today an ally and accomplice of the Turks and of all the cruelties committed by them against the Armenians in general and against the Karabakh Armenians in particular."⁶⁵⁴

After the refusal of the National Council to submit to this demand, Shuttleworth announced that he would be unable to prevent the Azerbaijani government from employing whatever measures it chose to resolve the situation. Consequently, Sultanov cut off all roads leading to the Karabakh plain and all trading with the Armenians was forbidden on threat of death. The blockade gradually brought famine to the mountainous areas of Karabakh, and at the same time, Sultanov organized terrorist brigades of Kurds - 'two of them led by his brothers. As a result, more Armenian villages were destroyed.⁶⁵⁵ The plundering of villages and other similar acts that happened in Karabakh provoked strong reactions from the Armenians, Georgians and the US representatives in the region. So the US delegation asked their spokesmen in Paris to convince the British authorities to dismiss the Ottoman officers from Zangezour and Karabakh. This led to an interim summons of Khosrov Beck Sultanov to Baku. Despite the promise of the British forces commander in the Caucasus to remove him and other criminals from the proceedings, he was reinstated in Karabakh after a few weeks.

On this occasion, Sultanov asked for the sixth Karabakh Armenian meeting to be held in Shoshakand in the western suburb of Shusha on the 29th June. Beck Rostam Bikov, as the representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, attended the meeting and made a number of promises. The Armenians agreed that in return for a guarantee of complete administrative and cultural autonomy for Karabakh, three conditions had to be met: firstly, they would not appoint non-Armenians to administrative posts in the region; secondly, they would not disarm Armenian military units; and thirdly, not dispatch forces to Zangezour through Karabakh until the final settlement of the Paris peace conference. In return Armenia would agree to Azerbaijan's interim sovereignty over the region.

To that end, a three-person Armenian delegation was sent to Baku to finalise these demands (one of whom was murdered on the way). The other two negotiated with the Azerbaijani authorities and returned to Shusha accompanied by Sultanov. The Azerbaijani government accepted the proposals with some modifications. On the return journey to Shusha, Sultanov treated them kindly so as to reassure and encourage the Armenian moderate political party. He also allowed the traffic and trade route to drought-stricken Shusha to be reopened.⁶⁵⁶ The seventh meeting was held in Shoshakand on the 12th August to examine the status quo and to make the final decision about compromising with Baku. Finally, on 19th August it was decided to accept the provisional sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan until the status of Karabakh had been finalized in the Paris peace conference and to permit the administrative organization of the National Council to remain in the region.

In a ceremony, on the 22nd August 1919, the delegation of Karabakh Armenians signed the document relating to Azerbaijan's provisional sovereignty over Karabakh. In early September, the Azerbaijani authorities began to concentrate forces and equipment in Evlakh for an operation in Zangezour. (Why did they launch this attack?) They launched their attack in early November, but after a number of clashes they had to withdraw. On 23rd

November, the Azerbaijani and Armenian Prime-Ministers reached an agreement to abandon the conflict and to settle their differences peacefully in Tiflis. However, the local skirmishes continued in Zangezour as before.

The British government was forced to withdraw its military forces from the Caucasus for several reasons, amongst these was the cost of war damage, the need to recall and grant leave to the soldiers and also the pressure to cut military expenditure.

Another important event that happened at that time was the renewal of the Turkish administration and their further influence and interference in the political developments of the Caucasus.

In the spring of 1919, the Republic of Azerbaijan officially declared that Azerbaijani-Armenian political relations would only be normalized if the regions of Karabakh, Zangezour, Ordubad, Julfa, Nakhichevan, Surmalu, Sharor and Vadibaazar (meaning the Karabakh-Zangezour-Nakhichevan link) were placed under the control of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The situation went from a warming of ties and then hostility and then a warming and so on.

Worrying about the increasing strength of the Turkish Resistance Movement, the British government, which had supported Baku since its deployment in the Caucasus, decided to check the movement by handing over Nakhichevan to the Republic of Armenia. However, considering its geographical position and the majority Moslem population, it was difficult for Armenia to maintain its dominance over Nakhichevan.

Another regional development, which had a great effect on the future of the Caucasus concerned the USSR. By developing its authority on the northern borders of the Caucasus, Moscow adopted a strategy based on challenging the European colonial powers, who opposed the Bolshevik system.

The Karabakh-Nakhichevan-Zangezour link was thought of as the best way to establish a permanent transit road and to send military equipment to Mustafa Kamal Pasha. Considering the Armenia-Azerbaijan problem which prevented the developing of bonds between Turkey and Russian, Mustafa Kamal's proposal, which was to subdue Armenia and integrate Azerbaijan with the territory of the USSR, was accepted by the Russians.

At this juncture, contrary to what was agreed at the seventh meeting, Khosrov Beck Sultanov ordered the Karabakh Armenians (who previously accepted provisional Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh - a situation that had lasted until the Paris peace conference finalized the matter) to agree to the unconditional and *de facto* sovereignty of Azerbaijan. He sent a letter to the Karabakh National Council in which he threatened that if they did not obey his demand, he would raise Karabakh to the ground. He first surrounded Karabakh with Azerbaijani troops and then on 19th February 1920 called on the Armenian Council to agree unconditionally to the integration of Karabakh with Azerbaijan. The 8th Congress, held on February 28th to discuss the future status of Karabakh encountered differences of opinion and divisions between

the two factions. One group comprised the military commanders of the different regions of Karabakh, the other was the Dashnaks, who made up the majority of the representatives (96 persons) and who called for resistance and opposition to Sultanov's ultimatum, stressing the bitter experiences caused by Azerbaijan's indirect sovereignty during the past few months. Another group was made up mostly of Armenian Bolsheviks or Shusha merchants, (45 to 50 persons) who deemed it advisable to compromise.

At the 9th Congress of the Dashnak party held in Yerevan from the 12th-15th November, 1919, the Karabakh question and the need to restore the province to Armenia was discussed, and Arsen Michealian was sent to Karabakh to supervise and coordinate the military operations. This time, Dashnaks' military committees in Varanda, Khachen, Dizak and Jivanshir decided to take control of Karabakh by means of an extensive campaign. Also, the Dro forces were ordered back from Zangezour. The revolt, launched at dawn on 23rd March 1920 with an assault by Armenian units in Khankendy, Askeran, Dizak and other parts, failed and Sultanov's army controlled the situation once again.

On 23rd April, the 9th Congress of the Karabakh Armenians was held in the village of Taghavard and declared that Karabakh was an inseparable part of Armenia, although they had no power to realize the claim. Soon after this, the Bolsheviks reached the borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On 27th April, Serge Mironoglou Kirev, accompanied by 75,000 soldiers of the 11th division of the Red Army, arrived in Baku without any resistance and the Bolsheviks took over the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁶⁵⁷

On 29th April, Davoud Hosseinev, the Defence Commissar of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan gave the Armenian government an ultimatum to withdraw its forces from Karabakh to Zangezour within three days. In this communiqué confirmed by Kirev, Orjonikdze and Lovandovski, the major executors of Moscow's policy in the region, it was made clear that if the revolutionary committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan did not comply, their action would be considered a declaration of war.

The Armenians were forced to accede to the Bolsheviks' demand. Thus, General Dro submitted to the Russian stipulations and handed over his armaments and provisions to the Armenian Bolsheviks. He evacuated Karabakh on 12th May. The Sovietization of Karabakh was announced by the 11th Congress of the Karabakh Armenians, which was convened on 26th May and supervised by the Bolsheviks.⁶⁵⁸

Since the Bolsheviks had approved the independence of Georgia by concluding an agreement on 7th May, the Armenian authorities opened negotiations with Moscow concerning the recognition of their independence and territorial integrity (consisting of Zangezour, Karabakh and Nakhichevan).

But after a few rounds of talks between the Bolsheviks and the Armenians, no decision was made regarding these cities. After the Bolsheviks had resolved the crisis, a regiment of the 11th division of the Red Army attacked Zengezour

through Karabakh, and captured Goris on 5th July. Simultaneously, a division of the Bolshevik forces plunged into war with Dro's forces in Kazakh, from the Karabakh north-west. Consequently, the Armenian government called for a withdrawal from the conflict and negotiations with the Bolsheviks. Armenia agreed to the Red Army's occupation of the three disputed regions and, on 10th August 1920, signed an agreement with Russia which from now on occupied Karabakh, Zangezour and Nakhichevan in order to create favourable conditions for an equitable solution to the territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On 13th September 1920, the Turkish army attacked the territory of the Republic of Armenia and, after two months, captured the regions of Kars, Ardahaand and Sari-Ghomesh. Because of this attack, the Republic of Armenia was broken up and its authority was ceded to Bolshevik Russia on 2nd December 1920. Afterwards, during an assembly of the party, Stalin stressed that it was not feasible to hand over the disputed areas to Dashnak Armenia. He hinted that this would be possible if Armenia was to become a communist state. Thus, the Turkish attacks, on the one hand, and the Bolshevik pressure, on the other, finally forced the Revolutionary Committee, which had been held in Baku and attended by the Armenian Bolsheviks, to enter Yerevan on 29th November where it announced the setting up of the Socialist Republic of Armenia.

Karabakh in the Russian Era

Following the annexation of the Republic of Armenia by the Soviet Union on 30th November, Narimanov, the President of the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan, sent his Armenian counterpart an astonishing telegram, stating bluntly: "As of today, the old frontiers between Armenia and Azerbaijan are declared to be non-existent. Mountainous Karabakh, Zangezour, and Nakhichevan are recognized to be integral parts of the Socialist Republic of Armenia."⁶⁵⁹ The next day Orjonikidze described it as a historic document unprecedented in the history of humanity.⁶⁶⁰

Thus, the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan agreed unilaterally that Nakhichevan, Zangezour and Karabakh should be part of Soviet Armenia. In his speech on 2nd December, before the Baku council, Narimanov described these regions as inseparable parts of Armenian. Stalin on 4th December wrote in *Pravda*: "Soviet Azerbaijan is willingly turning over Zangezour, Nakhichevan, and mountainous Karabakh to Soviet Armenia...Soon the old hostility between Armenia and its neighbouring Moslems will be settled."⁶⁶¹ Let everyone be advised that only the Soviet Union's government was able to settle the old conflict between the two nations."⁶⁶²

After securing the Bolshevik position in Moscow, the Soviet Union gradually revealed its main regional policy towards Caucasian issues, as they did not need any enduring policy for Armenia any more. Through the negotiations in Moscow, which led to an agreement on 16th March 1921, the Bolsheviks and Turks agreed that Nakhichevan was an autonomous province under the

protection of Azerbaijan and as such could not be assigned to any other government.⁶⁶³

By transferring Nakhichevan to the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan on 1st December, the first step towards nullifying the declaration of the Azerbaijani revolutionary committee had been taken, and following this matter, a review of other warring areas was started. In early May the Caucasian bureau of the Moscow government sent a mission composed of representatives of the three republics of the Caucasus to investigate the settlement of the border issues, but it was obvious from the start that they had basic disagreements. Narimanov insisted on control of Karabakh, but on considering the people's rebellion, especially in Zangezour, and the weak position of the Bolsheviks in the region, it was thought advisable to place stress on the annexation of the mountainous region of Karabakh by Armenia. Thus, on 12th June, a declaration was issued by Alexander Miasnikian, the Armenian Prime Minister, stated that: "based on the declaration of the revolutionary committee of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and the agreement of the Soviet Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia, we declare that from this moment the mountainous region of Karabakh is an integral part of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia."⁶⁶⁴

Askanaz Mravian was appointed as the official representative of upland Karabakh by the Armenian government. This was when Narimanov considered that granting control of Karabakh was merely a provisional form of "hush money". He implicitly adopted a big stick policy, pointing out the prospect of reforming the anti-Soviet Union groups in Azerbaijan.⁶⁶⁵ During the June meetings, Bekzadian, the Armenian representative, proposed a revision of unjust divisions dating from the Tsarist era, especially regarding Akhalkalki and Karabakh, With 72 per cent and 94 per cent of the Armenian population, respectively, situated within Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Georgian and Azeri representatives objected and he found himself in a minority, so he referred the issue to the Caucasus bureau for investigation.

Thus, the Communist party, which was administering that bureau, decided to hold a special meeting and study the border problems of the region. Narimanov and Mravian, the governor of Karabakh, were asked to go to Tiflis with great urgency. Stalin, who was in a sanitarium in the north of the Caucasus, came to Tiflis and one of the special meetings of Caucasus bureau was held in the presence of 51 local Soviet officials and four proposals were put forward, namely:

- Karabakh was to be within Azerbaijan.
- To resort to a referendum throughout Karabakh attended by the whole of the Azeri and Armenian population.
- The unity of the mountainous part of Karabakh with Armenia.
- The carrying out of a referendum only in the mountainous region of Karabakh (the Armenian sector).

After lengthy discussion, a resolution to transfer upland Karabakh to Armenia was carried, despite Narimanov's opposition. However, Narimanov demanded that the matter be reconsidered by the Central Committee of the

Russian Communist party, for a final decision. The bureau accepted his recommendation.⁶⁶⁶ On 5th July, after presenting the proposals and voting, and under pressure from Stalin, it was forced to accept the transfer of Karabakh to Azerbaijan.⁶⁶⁷ In view of the need to inaugurate national peace between the Moslems and Armenians, and mindful of the economic links between the mountainous and lower areas of Karabakh and of their permanent ties with Azerbaijan, it was decided to leave upland Karabakh within the frontiers of Azerbaijan and to give it a large measure of regional autonomy, with the town of Shushi as its centre, forming part of the autonomous region.⁶⁶⁸

This decision was a part of Stalin's "divide and rule" policy for the nationalities. By placing the Armenians of Karabakh inside Azerbaijan as a "hostage", the Armenian SSR would be less likely to act against the wishes of the Kremlin.⁶⁶⁹

Thus, the issue of Karabakh was officially settled. Although there is no clear proof of a change in the opinion of the authorities of the Soviet Union regarding the issue of Karabakh, the reason for this is obvious. After effectively "Sovietizing" Georgia and suppressing the Dashnaks in Zangezour, they did not need to agree with the Armenians. On the other hand, Azerbaijan's economic and strategic importance as a window onto the eastern revolution and, above all, its special role in Moscow-Ankara political relations - which were still enjoying a warm and successful period - had an effect on Russian change in policy.⁶⁷⁰ It is noteworthy that Stalin's other decision in the decade of the 1920s was to establish the Kurdistan autonomous region, thereby aiming to create an artificial border on the demarcation line between Armenia and Karabakh.⁶⁷¹

On 19th July 1921, in his report explaining the Caucasian border issues to the Executive Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Narimanov, the President of the Azerbaijani Revolutionary Committee, stated that "mountainous Karabakh remains an integral part of Soviet Azerbaijan, preserving its right to internal autonomy within the framework of the Soviet Union's constitution and under a regional executive committee."⁶⁷²

However, the granting of autonomy was followed by a period of unrest in the region. As a result of the continuing turmoil, the Communist Party assigned a committee to look into the matter. After a six-month study, the committee presented a report to the chairman. Subsequently, based on the proposals of the committee, the regions of Lachin, and Kalbajar were separated from Karabakh. Also, the territories of Shamkhor, Khanlar, Dashkesan and Gulistan, most of whose inhabitants were Armenians, were detached from north Karabakh. Finally, on 24th July 1923, the creation of the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was declared. On 10th August of the same year, its capital was transferred from Shusha to Khankendi. In honour of Stepan Schaumian, a famous Armenian communist, Khankendi was later renamed Stepanakert.⁶⁷³

It should be noted that despite all the Communist claims and extensive propaganda regarding the final settlement Karabakh through the creation of an autonomous province, the differences and tensions were in effect never-ending, because the Azeris disagreed with granting autonomy and the Armenians claimed it was not enough. So both sides decided to take steps to achieve their particular goals, even after a settlement.

During the 1920s, a secret organization known as "Karabakh" was active throughout the region and supported the cause of the Armenians. In 1929, after the intensifying of Turkification, some demonstrations were staged in favour of annexation of Karabakh by Armenia. One should mention that the efforts made by Khanjian, the first secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, to restore Armenian hegemony over Karabakh led to his death in July 1936. Similar measures taken by Harutunian, the successor of Khanjian from 1945 to 1949, produced no results though it did not lead to his demise.⁶⁷⁴

During Stalin's reign, any measure taken to protest the statue quo was harshly suppressed. According to some sources, it most probably happened at the same period when the Armenians of Karabakh had been treated unjustly and in such a manner that the level of cultural development in that region was lower than other regions of Azerbaijan and the Karabakhis were deprived of cultural and educational exchanges with Armenia, such as radio, books, and so on.⁶⁷⁵

However, after the death of Stalin and the period of relative calm associated with the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, a new phase started by highlighting the issue of Karabakh. During the Khrushchev era, this was acclaimed as "the rehabilitation of the nations". It created an open climate for "destalinization", and a revision of the strategy of the federation. It also supported the competence and authority of the republics. This led to the expressing of patriotic feelings in some regions, especially in Karabakh.

From 1960 onwards, together with the 40th anniversary of the "Sovietization" of Armenia, hopes were raised about the re-annexation of Karabakh by Armenia.

On 19th May 1963, a petition signed by 4,500 Armenian Karabakhis was delivered to Khrushchev, requesting the annexing of NK to the Republic of Armenia and freedom from the hegemony of Azerbaijan. This petition also pointed out the continuation of Azerbaijan's discriminatory and aggressive policies against the Armenians.⁶⁷⁶

But Khrushchev, who intended to revise many Stalinist policies quickly realized that paying heed to nationalist feelings and granting concessions to the nationalities would not resolve the problem – it would have caused it to be intensified and would lead to a rise in racial unrest. Thus, he ignored Armenia's demand and the Karabakh issue remained unsolved under him.

Finally, the unanswered demands of the Armenians, and their sense of collective failure to gain sovereignty, wounded their sensibilities and provoked

popular demonstrations and protests. These protests which were held in Yerevan and Karabakh were suppressed.

After Khrushchev was removed from office, during the ceremonies of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian genocide on 24th April 1965, a demonstration was staged by a crowd of a hundred thousand people in Yerevan and one of their slogans was the annexation of the coveted lands by Armenia.⁶⁷⁷

After Khrushchev, Armenian leaders and famous figures corresponded with the Soviet leaders. This had no impact, apart from the fact that greater pressure and force was unleashed on the Armenians. This led to more emigration from Karabakh.

Under the regimes of Brezhnev, Andropov and Cherninko, who followed after Khrushchev, no great change occurred to the status of Karabakh, until 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as Secretary-General of the USSR Communist Party.

After Gorbachev swept to power on 11th March 1985, he made efforts to terminate the "Brezhnev stagnation" and to nullify it. The first Congress held during the time of Gorbachev was convened in February 1986 and was not very encouraging for the people of that country, especially because he described the people of the Soviet Union as a social-international population in which there was friendship and respect for national cultures among the different societies.⁶⁷⁸ But subsequent developments confirmed the failure of the concept of internationalism and the lack of effectiveness of his policies and measures and finally led to the overturning of his comments regarding the races.

On 5th March 1987, it was a geologist and a member of the Communist Party, Suren Aivazian, who, in a long letter addressed to Gorbachev, described the conditions of the Karabakh Armenians and expressed their demands. This letter, like previous ones, reported the conditions of Karabakh within the framework of party theories, but because it was expressed under *perestroika*⁶⁷⁹, it gave rise to new developments in the history of the Karabakh conflict.⁶⁸⁰

The number of sporadic incidents increased quickly from 1987 onwards, and letters demanding unification started to flow in to the Moscow authorities.⁶⁸¹ In August 1987, a petition prepared by the Armenian Academy of Sciences with hundreds of thousands of signatures (in Armenian) requested the transfer of NK and Nakhichevan to the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. (SSR).⁶⁸² The summer of 1987, and in August, a vast petition in ten volumes with more than 75,000 signatures from Karabakh and Armenia was sent to officials in Moscow.⁶⁸³ Gradually, these measures transformed the popular and organized support and the staging of demonstrations in Yerevan. We can point to the "Karabakh Committee", among others, as being formed around the Karabakh ideal. This committee became vitally important in the course of time. In early 1988, a delegation of Karabakh Armenians left for Moscow to

deliver a copy of the letter of Armeno-Karabakh Unity and other documents to Demichio, the Vice- President of the USSR.⁶⁸⁴

In early February, several demonstrations were launched for the annexation of the region to Armenia. This time, the officials of the Communist Party arrived in Karabakh from Azerbaijan in order to normalize the situation, by stopping the demonstrations and ending the petitioning. But the demonstrators staged a sit-in at the regional bureaus of the party, and the governmental and party authorities joined them.

Although the delinquent authorities would inevitably be called to the regional bureaus and reprimanded, what this episode did reveal was that the Communist Party was losing its power in the region.

On 20th February, the Soviet parliament, in an extraordinary session, adopted a resolution calling on the soviets of Azerbaijan and Armenia to make every effort to reach "a positive decision concerning the transfer of the region from the SSR of Azerbaijan to the SSR of Armenia."⁶⁸⁵

This decision, which was legally and officially approved, was an unprecedented measure, which was confirmed by the labour organizations affiliated to the Communist Party such as the Youth Party. However, leaders of the Communist Parties of Azerbaijan and even Armenia expressed a negative reaction to the resolution. Massive demonstrations took place in support of the declaration, with the number of participants reportedly ranging from 700,000 to one million people.⁶⁸⁶

Nevertheless, the people were still assured of Gorbachev's promises. Sylva Kaputikian and Zori Balayan went to Moscow to meet Gorbachev, who asked for a month in which to bring about a renaissance in Karabakh.⁶⁸⁷ In return, he asked them to return to Yerevan and ask the people to be calm.

During this period, the Armenians and Azeris staged numerous protests in Baku, Yerevan, and Stepanakert to fight for their rights. They demanded that Moscow make a quick decision to their advantage. On the one hand, Gorbachev's government was under pressure from the Armenian control of the ruling government and, on the other, was worried about the risks of complying with Armenian demands, which could have led to a chain reaction leading to other groups. This issue put the ruling party in an embarrassing situation and forced them to make contradictory and rushed decisions, which dissatisfied both parties.⁶⁸⁸

These developments gradually turned into direct clashes and between the Armenians and Azeris. The violence reached its peak when an incident occurred in Sumgait, an industrial township in the suburbs of Baku. This region had a population of 200,000 people, of whom 18,000 were Armenians. On 26th February a group of Azeris who had escaped from the border regions entered the area. As these refugees arrived, it was rumoured that Armenians had attacked them.

A wave of violence followed in the city, despite pleas to calm the situation, violence lasted for three days, during which many people were killed and wounded. The official number of dead was 32 people, but many observers believed that the figure was at least 500. Thousands of Armenians emigrated. The rebellion was only quelled when disciplinary and army units were deployed in the region.⁶⁸⁹

The Sumgait incident was the first display of bloody conflict and influenced Karabakhi developments in two ways. First, this event made the peaceful settlement of the crisis almost impossible, and second, it increased the distrust and suspicion of the people towards the governmental authorities because of their slow response to tackle the violence. Because of this and the delay by the judicial officials to try those responsible for the violence, the government authorities probably considered that the best way of suppressing the new wave of reformism and liberalism was to add fuel to the conflicts and racial tensions as they had done in 1905.

After the news about Sumgait had been published, Yerevan, which had been calm for a while, became a restless region once again. On 8th March, a massive protest rally was staged in memory of the Sumgait victims.⁶⁹⁰ Also in the middle of March, a large crowd gathered in front of the office of the local Committee of the Communist Party and asked for a party plenum to be convoked. Finally, the party held the plenum on 18th March, and was thereby forced to confirm the resolution ratified on 20th February, stating the annexation of Karabakh by Armenia.

When the one-month deadline for Gorbachev to investigate and make a decision came to an end, the previous signs and the deployment of military units in different parts of Yerevan were not encouraging news for the Armenians. Thus, considering their experiences and recollections of Moscow's actions, they found that this time Russia intended to resort to force to solve the problem.

On 23rd March, the President of the Supreme Council of the USSR issued orders regarding the economic and cultural development of NK and disproved the probability of its annexation by Armenia. The Supreme Council also allotted 400 million roubles for cultural and economic affairs, including the construction of the Lachin-Stepanakert freeway, the broadcasting of Armenian-speaking programmes on Karabakh TV, and the restoration of destroyed monuments, aiming to distract public opinion and to purge hatred from people's hearts, but the scheme failed to attract public approval.⁶⁹¹

After the withdrawal of the law enforcement agencies of the USSR Ministry of the Interior from different parts of Yerevan, political demonstrations were organized once again, and the first official rally on 1st May, Labour Day, turned into a massive protest for the unity of Karabakh. Making changes in the leadership of the Communist Party was another USSR reaction to the developments. But the modifications were fruitless, because the opposition groups all but caused the Communist Party to cease to function and to lose

control of affairs, even though it was still the only organized power in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The dismissal by Gorbachev of Heydar Aliiev from the Azerbaijani Communist Party Chairmanship damaged the strength and self-confidence of the entire running of the party in the Azerbaijan Republic, because it was believed that his high rank in the K.G.B and his membership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union would guarantee the interests of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Moreover, his successor, Kamran Bagirov, had a weak and inconsistent role regarding the NK crisis. On the one hand, he had damaged Azerbaijan's reputation by preparing the ground for events like Sumgait, and on the other, regarding the escalating crisis of Karabakh and its virtual separation from Azerbaijan, he had not taken any independent measures, instead simply repeating the orders of Moscow.⁶⁹² Abdul-Rahman Vezirov, as a senior party official made every effort to re-establish the missed opportunity and authority, and made several changes in its local organization.

On 12th June 1988, by virtue of article 70 of the Soviet Union Constitution, the Karabakh Council approved the secession from Azerbaijan and the annexation by Armenia by a unanimous vote, stating the right of self-determination of the nations and voluntary associations of the corresponding SSR republics. The same evening, by invoking Article 78: "the territory of a union republic may not be altered without its consent", the leadership of the Azerbaijani Supreme Council nullified the Karabakh resolution.⁶⁹³ On the other hand, at the national level, some Azerbaijani intellectuals and authors tried to oppose the Armenians' efforts for the secession of Karabakh from Azerbaijan through measures such as publishing open letters. For example, while protesting against the events of November 1988, the Azeri hawks, mindful of the 200,000 Azeris residing in Armenia, had highlighted some issues like autonomy and cultural freedom.⁶⁹⁴

Finally, on 15th June, after a workers' strike and the closing of Yerevan's schools and commercial centres, the Supreme Council of Soviet Armenia adopted a resolution in which it formally gave its approval to the idea of joining NK to Armenia.⁶⁹⁵ But in order to make the resolution permanent, it had to be ratified by the Azerbaijani Supreme Council. But the Council nullified it on 17th June.⁶⁹⁶

Gorbachev reaffirmed the inviolability of the internal frontiers of the republics at the congress of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), but then a new wave of protests launched in Yerevan, finally led to a public strike on 5th July. However, there were still hopes for *perestroika*, so the Karabakh Committee asked the people to end the strikes until an extraordinary meeting of the Supreme Council of the USSR could be held to examine the recent resolutions of the Azerbaijani and Armenian Supreme Councils.

This time, the forces of the Ministry of the Interior were deployed in Yerevan once again, and this itself indicated the response of the leadership of the USSR. Thus, the heads of the Supreme Council, citing Article 78, claimed that joining Karabakh to Armenia was contrary to the Constitution, but the

Council promised to improve the way of life in Karabakh. Besides, it committed itself to appointing a delegation to examine Armenia's claim so as to restore normal conditions to the region. The delegation started its job in early August 1988 but the results were not acceptable to the Armenians.

From that time onwards, the Karabakh movement changed its policy from one where it persisted in legally confronting the ruling regime, to one where it appealed directly to the central government. It declared a state of emergency in both the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan and asked all journalists to leave the region, stressing that any gatherings or industrial action were illegal, but the strikes continued throughout Karabakh. Moreover, the revolts and demonstrations of the people in Yerevan increased to such an extent that they forced the Armenian Supreme Council to invite some members of the Karabakh Committee to hold an extraordinary meeting. The Armenian government tried to prevent the Supreme Council from holding the meeting, but the Karabakh Committee invited representatives and held a reunion in the Opera House in Yerevan and approved its plan in the Supreme Council. The Armenian government declared that the gathering had been illegal and tried to oppose it by proclaiming a state of emergency.⁶⁹⁷

On the other hand, despite the position of the Soviet Union authorities regarding Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh, the developments in Armenia and Karabakh and the increasing disaffiliation from the Baku authority had a worrying influence on Azerbaijani public opinion. On 17th November, there was a massive demonstration in Baku to protest against the weakness of the government in restoring complete sovereignty over Karabakh.⁶⁹⁸ The Azerbaijani intellectuals, who were worried that developments in Armenia and Karabakh would finally lead to the approval of the Soviet Union authorities and the secession of Karabakh from Azerbaijan, sent a petition to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and asked that Azerbaijan's sovereignty be guaranteed.

Simultaneously, a sentence of execution for one of the instigators of the Sumgait event was confirmed. This too caused a new wave of anti-Armenian rallies and protests in Azerbaijan. One of the main centres of the protests was Ganja with an Armenian population of approximately 140,000 people. The circumstances became so critical that the Russian commander of the troops deployed there asked Moscow to grant permission to move the Armenians out of the town. In Baku, a crowd of about 800,000 people flocked onto the streets and asked for the Armenians to be deported from Azerbaijan and Karabakh. At the same time, about 300,000 Armenians and Azeris were forced to leave their homes. Their hatred and indignation had a considerable influence on intensifying the animosity and the heightening of tension in Armeno-Azeri relations.

On 11th October 1988, the Communist leaders of the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia met in the capital of Karabakh to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. At the same time, the Central government promised to solve the Karabakh problem and brought it up in the main congress of the assembly. This reduced the strikes to some extent, but the action of the Central

government in arresting three Azeris, who had organized and had a hand in the Sumgait racial massacre, upset the Azeris once again and the negotiations of the Presidents failed.

The policy of the Central government which switched between legitimizing the Armenians and sometimes appeasing the Azeris, was to try to maintain a fragile balance and this policy had a considerable influence on the outlook and the new course of action of both presidents. Soon, Moscow's efforts to appease the two Presidents and stress the observing of a good neighbour policy and a peaceful settlement of the dispute came to nothing because the Presidents did not agree upon certain issues, such as ridding the region of Soviet troops and the withdrawal of the Armenian militias from Karabakh. The most important indication of their shared opinion was the failure of the central government. On the one hand, stressing the "enormous wrongdoing" of the centre which had created the Karabakh problem in 1920, the Armenian President regarded Moscow's invitation to peace and negotiation as a political game. The presence of the Soviet army in Karabakh, in particular, was proof of their dishonesty and the rightness of his claim. On the other hand, to most Azeris Gorbachev's appointment of Armenians as his advisors was at odds with his decisiveness and they believed that the K.G.B was trying to impose the Armenian claim based on a territorial swap. Such conclusions brought about a stalemate in the negotiations and destroyed the Azeris' confidence.

On 3rd December 1988 when the situation in both Republics threatened to get out of control, a terrible earthquake struck Armenia. This greatly helped the USSR and especially the Armenian government to capture leaders and members of the Karabakh Committee, thereby stabilizing its shaky position and authority in the region. But it failed to use the situation to divert public attention from the Karabakh issue

Simultaneously, on 12th January 1989, the Supreme Council of the USSR decided to stress keeping Karabakh within the Republic of Azerbaijan and to impose a "special government administration" on Karabakh, under the direct control of Moscow. Hence, a commission consisting of nine people (five representing the central authorities, three Armenians and one Azeri), took control of the Karabakh Autonomous Oblast. The Commission was solely responsible to the Supreme Council. For their own reasons, both the Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities were satisfied with the initiative taken by Moscow and they considered it a step forward in achieving their goals. The Azeris construed this measure as a re-affirmation of their territorial integrity and eventually they were satisfied, because of the dissolution of the local party and governmental machinery which was totally under the control of the Armenians.

The Armenians also considered it as nearing the end of 68 years of Azerbaijani domination over Karabakh and held out some hope for a positive outcome and future. However, most Armenians were in doubt as to whether Moscow's policy would solve the Karabakh problem or not.

After three months of calm following the earthquake, the lack of an investigation into the status of Karabakh resulted in considerable dissatisfaction and unrest and finally led to public strikes in May 1989. These prompted negotiations to be initiated between party officials and representatives of the Karabakh Armenians, on the one hand, and the regional special government administration on the other. The start of negotiations, along with the release of some Armenian political activists eased the tension.

On 17th June, a group of Anti-Communist parties and movements formed a coalition with the Karabakh Committee and set up the Organization of the Armenian National Movement, which was recognized by the Armenian Supreme Council on 27th June, and asked its leaders to attend the meetings of the Supreme Council as advisors.

In Azerbaijan too, most people were pessimistic about the setting up of the "special government administration". In March, when the Armenian Supreme Council was preparing to officially recognize the opposition parties, the Azerbaijani Popular Front Parliament conducted a *pro forma* election, and despite the presence and activities of a multitude of opposition groups and parties, which had been formed during the unrest of November, the outcome of the election was never going to correspond with the people's vote and opinion. From the winter of 1989 onwards, through the intellectual efforts of figures like Neimet Panakhov, Ismail Sheykhli, Abulfazl Elchibey, Yusif Samedoglu, and Etibar Mamedov, a political front was formed. This was composed of different people and groups. Also, the Azerbaijani Popular Front held an assembly in the middle of July 1989 after inviting representatives from all over the country.

It is worth noting that, contrary to the opinion of party officials, this Front considered that the "special government administration" had negated Azerbaijan's sovereignty; hence, they staged massive demonstrations and strikes to nullify it and restore Azerbaijan's direct control over Karabakh. Taking into account its great influence among railway workers, one of the major tools of this Front was the economic sanctions imposed on Armenia and Karabakh in August 1989, especially considering that about 80 per cent of Armenia's imported commodities were carried by Azerbaijan's railway. This decision forced the Azerbaijani authorities to negotiate with the leaders of the Popular Front under pressure from Moscow. This was to terminate economic sanctions against Armenia and Karabakh and to lessen the massive wave of demonstrations and strikes in the republics, and finally to recognize the Front.

In Karabakh, because of the intensification of the activities of armed groups, the racial confrontations turned into military operations. The economy of the region was also crippled due to a cut in oil exports and the obstruction of cargo traffic and passenger trains.

Under such conditions, the Karabakh Armenians set up a founders' parliament and a National Council to take over the reins of Karabakh. On 5th

September, the Council, as its first step, asked the UN to intervene so as to guarantee the security of Karabakh.

Therefore, Moscow's "special government administration", which was lacking in the necessary power and influence, was increasingly weakened. Seeing that this special administration had come to an end, Moscow opened negotiations with the Baku authorities from autumn 1989 onwards and decided to restore Karabakh to Azerbaijani authority. Thus, on 28th November, the direct command of the Soviet Union was abolished by the Soviet Union Supreme Council, and Karabakh was returned to Azeri control. It was decided that a new delegation would be formed and sent to Karabakh to administer it through the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan.

In response to this development, the Armenian Supreme Soviet construed Moscow's decision as being illegal and asked the Soviet Union Supreme Council to nullify it and to promulgate the incorporation of NK into the Armenian Republic.

Nonetheless, the dissolution of the "special government administration" was seen as a success for Azerbaijan, as they had no control over Karabakh in practice. So, the Popular Front, which had turned into the most important component of Azerbaijan's political power, was invaded on two fronts. On the first front, Karabakh, the siege was intensified and the Azeri armed groups increased their activities. The Armenian TV station was captured and blacked out. Then, Azerbaijani troops tried to cut off the air routes - the only line of communication with the outside world – by means of explosions on the landing-field of Karabakh's only airport. These actions turned to armed encounters between hundreds of thousands of people in districts like Khanlar and Shaumian. On the second front, the forces were concentrated inside Azerbaijan and struggling for power. In Baku, the Popular Front's sympathizers seized the governmental buildings, and some other cities were also captured by the Popular Front itself.

In a situation where the Popular Front was making significant gains and the organization of the Communist Party was looking incoherent, the people launched attacks on those Azerbaijani cities with significant Armenian populations. Despite the opposition of Popular Front leaders and the presence of the Soviet army in the region, the struggle continued and finally led to Armenian emigration from Azerbaijan and a declaration of martial law by Moscow in Azerbaijan and Karabakh. On 20th January 1990 17,000 Russian military forces were deployed around Baku intent on advancing into the city. The massive intervention of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, in which it is estimated that up to 150 people died, brought to a close the initial period of *perestroika* in Azerbaijan, and initiated a coup against the Popular Front in order to restore the Communist Party to power in Azerbaijan.⁶⁹⁹

Thereafter, the idea was broached in Azerbaijan that Moscow's policy was biased towards the fulfilment of Armenia's goals and plans. Thus, it was suggested that they ought to settle the Karabakh problem without Russian

help in order to prevent hostile manoeuvres by Russia. This was why the Armenians also believed that Moscow was neglecting them, in spite of the 1990 developments. This assured them about the central government's strategies and new moves.

In short, after the military attacks on Baku, Vezirov was ousted from the Chairmanship of the Communist Party and was succeeded by Ayaz Motalibov, the Secretary of the Cabinet Council.⁷⁰⁰ Ayaz Motalibov, as the only candidate to receive the vote, was elected in the presidential election, in spite of his weakened position during the August 1991 coup.

On 18th October 1991 the Republic of Azerbaijan like the other republics declared its independence. At the same time, Armenia's Nationalist Movement gained a straight majority and the Communists were unseated after 70 years. On 14th August, Levon Ter-Petrossian, one of the members of the Karabakh Committee and the representative of Armenia's Nationalist Movement, was elected President. He installed the new government and appointed Vazgen Manokian, another official of the Movement, as the Prime Minister. A year later, in September 1991, an overwhelming majority of voters approved the referendum on independence, and Armenia officially declared its independence on the 23rd September.⁷⁰¹

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⁶⁴⁹ The Azerbaijani authorities claimed that General Andranike's forces had looted the Muslims when they came back to Goris. This issue was telegraphed by Malik Namaz Aliev, the ruler of the Zangezur region, to the cabinet ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 10th January 1990. It was filed among other historical documents of Azerbaijan.

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According to this reference an amount of 491,425 tonnes of oil had been exported, priced at 113.5 million roubles, available at: Raevskii, Angliiskaia interventsii. P. 20-22 and 68.

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